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THE CONCEPT OF CHURCH  
" "  
IN PAUL'S LETTERS AND IN THE WRITINGS OF ALEXANDER CAMPBELL:  
A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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A Dissertation  
presented to  
the Faculty of the  
School of Theology at Claremont

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Religion

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by  
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June 1972

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the writings of Paul and Alexander Campbell in order to gain a perspective on the Church as they saw it, as they responded to it, and as they assisted in its development. This examination will form a basis for comparison between the two men so that their points of agreement and disagreement can be identified. Finally, the author will suggest some possibilities concerning the nature of the Church that have resulted from the study.

Society finds itself in a time of great change, a time when the future is crashing in on us at such a rate that our foundation of existence is radically shaken. The power of technology has rocked us off our feet to the extent that we wonder if we can respond as sensitive human beings in such an age. We sense the powerlessness of our existence that has become so dependent on mechanization and the corporation. Life and living styles have changed so radically among people that we are questioning who we are and what we are all about, or ceasing to question altogether. Yet, in the midst of all of this, in the tragic war in South Vietnam, we see that technology cannot come close to defeating the spirit of a people, the spirit of a people

with a vision and a faith in that vision. The Church is floundering because it has lost its vision. The Church appears to be wandering in the desert without a clear vision of its direction. Therefore, we must begin again to ask what is the nature, what is the vision, of the Church.

It is the premise of the author that we can turn to the New Testament text, to the classical writings of the Church, and begin to reconstruct the elements that are essential for a vision of what the Church is. This dissertation will limit the study to Paul's epistles of I Thessalonians, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans. These documents were chosen primarily with respect to the New Testament view of the Church they represent and because they have been accepted as authentic letters of Paul. In the examination of the writings of Alexander Campbell, reliance upon the Christian Baptist, Christian System, Debate with Bishop Purcell, and the Christian Harbinger will be used. Through close analysis and comparison of the thoughts of these two men, basic concepts of the Church will hopefully emerge for the author and for the reader.

A comparison of the thoughts of Paul and Alexander Campbell has not been done previously. A great deal has been written about Paul and the Church and there have been several articles on Campbell and the Church. The writer feels that, because he stands in the tradition of Campbell

and in the Church, and because Campbell looked to the writings of the New Testament and particularly Paul's letters for his guidance, it would be well to gain some basic knowledge concerning the thought of these two men and to be able to distinguish between them.

This dissertation will begin with Paul's concept of the Church. The tradition in which Paul stood and was nurtured will be examined. The traditional understanding of basic concepts such as ecclesia or assembly and the eschatological motif developed in the Old Testament around the concepts of the saints and the elect will be studied in this section. The examination of the covenant tradition will be crucial. The next section will indicate how these traditional elements became manifest in the thought of Paul and examine the new quality or dimension expressed in the Body of Christ concept. Third, a close look will be taken into the manner in which the Church participates in the activity of God, specifically through the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Following this, there will be a chapter on the thought of Alexander Campbell concerning the Church. An attempt will be made to identify some of the basic assumptions that he worked from and some of the questions he was asking. First, the chapter will give some historical information. Second, it will express Campbell's basic concept of the



Church as the Body of Christ. Third, it will identify and examine the facts and ordinances of the Church which he views as the activity of God and the vehicles by which we experience and participate in grace. Fourth, it will describe the visual kingdom of Christ that is expressed in terms of the relationship of autonomy, cooperation, and authority. Fifth, it will identify the functions of the Church in terms of mission, evangelism, and education. Sixth, it will examine statements by Campbell concerning the ministry and officers of the Church.

The next chapter is divided into three major areas. The first area will identify the basic motifs found in Paul's concept of the Church. The second area will identify the basic motifs found in Campbell's concept of the Church. The third area will compare and identify the points of agreement and disagreement.

The final chapter consists of those insights which the present writer has gained from the study.

## CHAPTER II

### PAUL'S CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH

This chapter will focus its discussion on the concept of the Church as Paul describes it in his epistles, I Thessalonians, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans. The discussion will first examine the traditional motifs that appear in Paul's thought. This will include a study of qahal as a forerunner to ecclesia, the eschatological people of God, and the covenant tradition. Second, the discussion will examine the ways in which Paul translates these traditional motifs into the experience of the early Church. Especially important is the discussion of the new covenant tradition and concept of the Body of Christ. Third, the discussion will indicate how Baptism and the Lord's Supper are vehicles through which the early Church celebrates and participates in God's saving activity in the history of man through Jesus Christ.

#### I. TRADITIONAL CONCEPTS OF CHURCH

This section will outline the usage of the concepts of ecclesia, the eschatological people of God, and the covenant tradition. It is the traditional meaning of these concepts that influenced the development of the early Church, and it is in his tradition that Paul built his

thoughts. The parallel between the Old Testament term qahal and the New Testament term ecclesia will be observed. The concept of the eschatological people of God will be examined through the development of the terms elect and saints. The covenant tradition is an important foundational concept in Paul's thought. The historical problem of covenant tradition will be outlined and its basic meaning indicated.

### Ecclesia

In the epistles of Paul the term ecclesia is used as the fundamental title that designates the Christians as a group. From the traditional understanding of ecclesia a new concept emerged, a concept of Church that is founded on the strength of tradition but reflects a new perspective of religious existence and community. Therefore, to gain some understanding of the nature of the Church in Paul's letters, the traditional meaning of the term ecclesia must first be explored.

James Robinson points out that ecclesia in classical Greek is merely a term that refers to an assembly and does not necessarily point to a specific religious group or organization.<sup>1</sup> This is confirmed in Acts, where assembly

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<sup>1</sup>James M. Robinson, "The Theology of Paul" (An introductory lecture course given in the Winter Quarter of 1956 at the Candler School of Theology and at Columbia Theological Seminary), p. 62.

is referred to as a regularly summoned political body (Acts 19:39). The following sections will outline the use of the term ecclesia as it is found in the Old Testament and then as it appears in the New Testament.

Old Testament. The Septuagint contains a profound understanding of ecclesia; it refers to "the chosen people, an assembly of those called by YHWH-God."<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew equivalent is qahal. The basic meaning of this term is "meeting or assembly." The reference is to people gathered or summoned together for various reasons. The significance given to qahal depends upon the people summoned and the purpose for which they are summoned. Qahal is used in reference to a gathering for military duty (Genesis 49:6, Numbers 17:7, II Samuel 20:14, Ezra 38:7, Esther 8:11, Ezekiel 16:40), a gathering of prophets (I Samuel 19:20), a disorderly mob (Ecclesiastes 26:6). The term may refer to those who do evil (Psalms 26:5), as well as to those who worship God (II Chronicles 30:13, Ecclesiastes 50:13,20). Possibly the most significant interpretations of qahal, in a theological sense, is in reference to those gathered to erect a tent of meeting (Joshua 18:1), to those gathered before God at Horeb (Deuteronomy 4:10, 10:4, 18:16), and to those

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

gathered to hear his word (Jeremiah 26:9, Leviticus 8:4). Robinson states that qahal indicates the "true Israel" idea, the assembly of those faithful to YHWH. He asserts that the term is used to describe the people who received the covenant at Sinai, and who renewed it under Ezra. It is also the basis for Paul's understanding in the statements in I Corinthians 11:25 and II Corinthians 3:6ff.<sup>4</sup>

There are a few occasions in the Septuagint where qahal is rendered as "synagogue," which was also a common translation of the Hebrew edah. One meaning that edah assumed is significant in this discussion; it could be applied to a congregation apart from its acts of actual meeting together.<sup>5</sup> Bultmann contends that it is a term designed only for individual congregations and is never used as a term for Israel as the chosen people of God.<sup>6</sup>

Ecclesia never appears in the Septuagint as a translation for the Hebrew edah. Because of this close connection between the meaning of ecclesia and qahal as the chosen people of God, who are called by God to salvation,

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<sup>3</sup> Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), pp. 874-875; Paul S. Minear, "Idea of Church," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), I, 608.

<sup>4</sup> Robinson, op. cit., p. 62. <sup>5</sup> Minear, op. cit., p. 608.

<sup>6</sup> Rudolph Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), p. 38.

it is significant that the people of the early sect would refer to themselves as the ecclesia in the sense of being the extended gahal. The Greek term "synagogue" is limited in the New Testament usage to describe Jewish congregations, with one exception (I Corinthians 5:4).<sup>7</sup>

It has been established that the primary references to the term ecclesia in the Septuagint occur as gahal. This meaning is affirmed in the writings of Philo. Philo uses ecclesia in his rendering of the Sinai-assembly and for the gahal-YHWH (Deuteronomy 23:1ff.). Philo uses the term "synagogue" only for the synagogue-building.<sup>8</sup>

Ecclesia became the adapted term to signify the Church. The Church was understood as God's chosen people called into assembly by God's action in history.<sup>9</sup>

New Testament. There are many references to the term ecclesia in the New Testament. The Greek-English Lexicon lists three primary translations. One reference is translated as "an assembly, a regularly summoned political body" (Acts 19:39). Ecclesia can also refer to "an assemblage, gathering, or meeting" (Acts 19:32, 40). The most prevalent reference of ecclesia is to the Church or congregation as a totality of Christians living in one place

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<sup>7</sup> Minear, op. cit., p. 608.

<sup>8</sup> Bultmann, op. cit., p. 38. <sup>9</sup> Ibid.

(I Corinthians 11:18, 14:2ff., 19:28, 35:36, Matthew 18:17, Acts 5:11, I Corinthians 4:17, Philippians 4:15). It is used more specifically in reference to the church at Jerusalem (Acts 8:1, 11:22, I Corinthians 1:2, II Corinthians 1:1), house churches (Romans 16:5, I Corinthians 16:9, Colossians 4:15), the Church universal in which all believers belong (Matthew 16:18, Acts 9:31, I Corinthians 6:4, 12:28, Ephesians 1:22, 3:10, 21, 5:23ff.), and the Church of God (I Corinthians 1:2, 10:32, 11:16, 22:15, 15:9, II Corinthians 1:1, Galatians 1:13, Acts 20:28).<sup>10</sup>

It is significant that the major implications of ecclesia are directed to those who are "called or summoned," and that this assembly is to participate in some event, specifically, the hearing of the saving word of God. This is in direct contrast to the usage of synagogue. Synagogue is described as the congregation constituted in some one place, while the ecclesia is the assembly of those called by God to participate in the salvation event, similar to the understanding of qahal.<sup>11</sup>

The nature of the Church, as Paul describes it, is continually qualified by the action of being called and by

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<sup>10</sup>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago: University Press, 1967), p. 240.

<sup>11</sup>Johannes Weiss, Earliest Christianity (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), II, 617.

the one who "calls, summons or gathers" it. The ecclesia of God (I Corinthians 1:2, 10:32, 11:16, 22, 15:9, II Corinthians 1:1, I Thessalonians 2:14) is constituted by God's action as he calls the community, dwells within it, rules over it, and realizes his purposes through it. It is this understanding of being called and summoned by God upon which the entire ecclesia tradition finds its significant meaning.

Members of the early Church understood the "true Israel" to be the faithful remnant in the sight of God. The Church is now the community of faith which has come to transcend the racial and cultural barriers and embrace the faithful called out of the nations of the earth.<sup>12</sup> Robinson states three good reasons why the New Testament community prefers the term ecclesia to that of synagogue. First, only the term ecclesia implies the self-understanding of the early Church as the people of God and another synagogue could not have laid claim to this exclusive meaning. Second, the early Church included the participation of women in a way that synagogue would not allow and had been associated with ecclesia since the time of Ezra and Jeremiah (Jeremiah 44:15). Third, the Christians were rejected and

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<sup>12</sup> Ernest F. Scott, The Nature of the Early Church (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1941), p. 30.



persecuted by members of the local synagogues.<sup>13</sup> For these reasons the New Testament Church preferred to be called the ecclesia.

### Eschatological People of God.

The ecclesia came to mean the true eschatological community of God. The Messiah who was promised to Israel was to gather his people together. This gathering appears to have a strong sense of finality. The ecclesia was the gathered community of those who were faithful to the word of God. The New Testament community appropriated to themselves the title of the Old Testament community, "Congregation of God" or the gahal-YHWH. On one hand this title designated Israel as the true people of God, and, on the other hand, it had already become an eschatological term; Judaism expected that at the end there would be a gathering together of the scattered Israel, and Israel would be the agent by which this event would be accomplished. The hidden congregation would become visible. The early Church, by declaring itself the congregation of God, declared itself to be the fulfillment of the hopes of the apocalyptists.<sup>14</sup> The members of the community bear the eschatological titles of the saints and the elect.

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<sup>13</sup> Robinson, op. cit., p. 62. <sup>14</sup> Bultmann, op. cit., p. 60.

The Saints. In the discussion of the Pauline view of the Church there is a frequent designation of Christians as the saints (Romans 1:7, 12, 13, 16:15, Philippians 4:21, I Corinthians 6:11). Robinson emphasizes that Paul's usage of this term comes directly from Old Testament tradition since, in the Hellenistic world, godly people are never referred to as saints, but this term is used frequently in the Old Testament.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, tracing the Jewish meaning will provide insight into the dimensions of usage in Pauline thought.

With reference to Leviticus 11:44, "you shall be holy since I am holy," Robinson points out that ceremonial cleanliness is a factor that separates God's people from the world. Israel becomes a "holy nation" (Exodus 19:6, Hosea 11:12, Jeremiah 2:3, Wisdom 18:5, 9). From the time of the prophets on it was customary to call the faithful remnant of Israel the saints (Isaiah 4:3, 62:12, Psalms 16:3 34:9). Out of this development derives the concept of the saints as the "holy" remnant of Israel. These few are holy because they "glory in the Holy One of Israel" (Isaiah 41:16). In I Maccabees 1:45 and 10:39 there is specific reference made to those Jews who keep diligently the law as the "holy ones" or the saints. Robinson points out that

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<sup>15</sup>Robinson, op. cit., p. 60.

during the inter-testamental period there is a slight change in the understanding of saints, and the term comes to take on an eschatological character, referring to the saints of the end of time. There are various references made to the pious Jews who will emerge triumphant at the end of time (Daniel 7:18, 21, 25:27, 8:34, Song of Solomon 17:28, 36). Enoch calls the Messianic congregation the saints (Enoch 38:1ff., 41:2, 43:4, 48:1, 50:1, 51:2, 62:8, 65:12, 70:3, 100:5, 103:2). The testament of Levi 18:11 refers to the (Levitic) Messiah who "shall give to the saints to eat from the tree of life, and the spirit of holiness (cf. Romans 1:4) shall be on them."<sup>16</sup>

It can therefore be stated that the saints were closely associated with the idea of salvation in the last days and tied closely to the understanding of Israel as a holy remnant belonging to the Messiah. When Paul and the early Church appropriated this term as a self-defining term they were in actuality proclaiming to the world that they understood themselves to be the holy remnant, that they comprised the true Israel of the Messiah, and that they were in the last days.

The Elect. A parallel term for the saints is the term elect. The term elect follows a similar pattern of

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

development to that of saints. An early usage of elect is connected with the concept of the nation of Israel, the chosen people. In I Chronicles 16:13, the elect refers to the nation of Israel. But by the time of the prophet Isaiah, the term conveys a reference to remnant (Isaiah 65:9, 15). Following the development of the term saints, elect acquired an eschatological understanding by the time of Enoch, and refers to the people of the Messiah at the end of time. It is also apparent that saints and elect are equivalent and often stand side by side (Enoch 41:2, 50:1, 62:8). Robinson states that in Enoch the elect is a favorite term; the book is even dedicated to the elect (Enoch 1:1).

The words of the blessing of Enoch, where with he blessed the elect and righteous, who will be living in the day of tribulation, when all the wicked and godless are to be removed.

Robinson points out in the development of the oldest sections of Enoch a reference made to the elect as "the entire nation of Israel" while in the later similitudes (Enoch 37-71) the scope of the term is limited to mean "the holy remnant at the end of time."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 60-61.

### The Covenant Tradition.

Thus far the discussion has been concerned with the elements that are hidden in the background of Paul's ideas, and specifically the terms ecclesia, elect, and saints. Before the discussion can turn to Paul's concept of the Church it is also necessary to review the covenant tradition, the chosen people of God. It is in this context that the early Church struggled for identity and existence.

This section will identify a problem which is a matter of debate among scholars, namely, the significance of the covenant in the life of Israel. It will present the major points of controversy and indicate the significant meanings of the concept. It will conclude with a statement indicating the significance of the covenant understanding for the New Testament Church.

The Covenant Debate. There is a debate among scholars as to the significance of the covenant understanding in determining the development of Israel as a nation. There are scholars, such as Eichrodt, Oesterly, Robinson, and Mendenhall, among others, who assert that the covenant came from the desert wanderings and that it was the significant element determining the coming together of the various tribes.<sup>18</sup> Opposed to this view are Wellhausen, Von Rad,

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<sup>18</sup> George E. Mendenhall, "Covenant," (The Interpre-

Whitley, and Noth, among others, saying that the concept of covenant did not have any importance in the developing life of Israel until the eighth century prophets. These men argue that the tribes came together as the result of worshipping at the same shrines. To them, the covenant was a religious development of the prophets.<sup>19</sup>

The scholars that support the thesis of the covenant being the binding element in the development of Israel affirm that Israel did not share in a common history. They claim that Israel was not actually the direct descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that Israel was not a group of people originally bound together by natural blood ties. They contend that Israel was the result of people with different traditions coming together in a covenant relationship, accepting Mosaic Law and YHWH. They understood themselves to be the participants in a common historical salvation "story" that bound them together as a people with a common background.<sup>20</sup>

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ter's Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), I, 716; W.O.E. Oesterley, Hebrew Religion (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1935), pp. 156-159; Walther Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), I, 6-11.

<sup>19</sup> Martin Noth, The History of Israel (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), p. 62.

<sup>20</sup> Jakob Jocz, The Covenant (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), p. 51.

This argument asserts further that it is extremely difficult to understand any other way in which Israel could have developed the binding sense of law and justice, morality and ethics, which is so inseparable from the religion of Israel, without the support of a covenant. It is difficult to understand how divergent groups could come together under the one God YHWH without a strong sense of covenant. It seems to follow that the covenant relationship between Israel and YHWH, which was inseparable from the historical solidarity of the tribes, is not merely a stage in the history of religious concepts, but an actual event which had a definite historical setting and significant historical consequences.<sup>21</sup>

Arguing against the significance of the covenant, Wellhausen states that the idea of covenant between God and Israel was a creation of the prophets, beginning with Elijah and Amos.<sup>22</sup> Noth, Alt, and Von Rad continue to support this idea and argue further that the confederation of the early tribes rested on the amphictyony, the gather-

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<sup>21</sup>George E. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," Biblical Archaeologist, XVII (September 1954), 50-75.

<sup>22</sup>Delbert R. Hillers, Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964), p. 2.

ing of the tribes around a central sanctuary. They state that in the covenant language the Israelites are represented as making a compact with YHWH, but observe that the covenant apparently does not have a direct implication or cohesive effect on the tribes themselves.<sup>23</sup> Whitley establishes eight separate points to refute the thesis that the Sinaitic covenant was the foundation of the unity of Israel.<sup>24</sup>

The problem of the origin of covenant will not be solved in these short paragraphs. It seems clear, however, that by the beginning of the literary prophecy the Israelites believed themselves to be bound to YHWH by a covenant. This relationship was kept before the eyes of the people by periodic recital of the covenant every seven years in the midst of a ceremony of covenant renewal (Deuteronomy 31:9-13).<sup>25</sup> Few contemporary scholars would disagree with this point. It is this significance and importance that was placed upon the covenant in the life of the religious community in late Judaism that forms the background of early Christianity.

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<sup>23</sup> C.F. Whitley, "Covenant and Commandment in Israel," Journal of Near Eastern Studies, XXII (January 1963), 38.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 39-43.

<sup>25</sup> Hillers, op. cit., p. 84.



The Covenant Significance. The origin of the Hebrew word for covenant, berit, is not certain among scholars. It is suggested that the original definition for covenant meant "to bond, fetter, cut, or meal."<sup>26</sup> However, at the present time, no one has precisely determined the origin. There appears to be at least three different traditions found in Exodus, Deuteronomy, and Joshua that differ at significant points.

There are three elements in the covenant tradition that are significant. First is the understanding of bond or of drawing together, a cohesiveness of relationship. The second is that of election. Israel understood that YHWH elected her to free, feed, guide, protect, and fight on her behalf. Central to the covenant tradition is the story of redemption, of God's saving acts in the life of the people.<sup>27</sup> The third element is expressed as hesed, meaning "the covenant is a free gift of grace." It stresses God's freedom in the relationship. He could abandon Israel at any moment. Yet out of love, hesed, he remains faithful to Israel and the covenant. In this way the covenant makes a demand on the whole man; it makes a plea to complete

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<sup>26</sup> A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, p. 136.

<sup>27</sup> John Bright, The Kingdom of God (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1953), p. 28.

devotion or surrender to God. Notice that Israel did not make a covenant with God. Rather, God, out of his love and devotion for Israel, chose, elected, her. Israel was not required to symbolically participate in the sealing of the covenant by walking between two halves of an animal or by dipping her hands in the bowl of blood as was the custom<sup>29</sup> in the sealing of secular covenants.

This free act of God in history raised Israel to the unique dignity of the People of God in whom his hesed<sup>30</sup> was to be realized in all generations (Psalms 89). Therefore, the assembly (qahal) of Israel was a gathering of the people called to be People of YHWH (am YHWH), People of God (am Elohim), holy people (am qahosh) who stood in relationship to God as his possession, property, inheritance. These People of God are bound to him through the covenant. The love of God through all generations, the hesed, is bound up in the ultimate destiny of those called to participate in God's saving acts.

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Henry S. Gehman, "The Covenant: The Old Testament Foundation of the Church," Theology Today, VII (April 1950), 30.

29

John M. Oesterreicher, The Israel of God (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1963), p. 48.

30

Jocz, op. cit., p. 55.

## II. PAUL'S FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH

In this section Paul's fundamental concept of the Church shall be discussed in terms of the new covenant tradition and the concept of the Body of Christ. The section on the new covenant tradition will draw together the new understanding of ecclesia and the eschatological people of God. The section about the Body of Christ will suggest a new dimension of the understanding of Church.

### New Covenant Tradition

The transition from the old covenant to the new covenant, the transition from the old people of God to the new people of God, is developed in the thought of Paul. Paul recognizes the new covenant as God's covenant. The major difference for Paul rests in the fact that the conditions of the old covenant can not be met (II Corinthians 3:14-18). The new assembly of God, the Church, is composed of those who through faith have responded to the grace of God as expressed in the new covenant. For Paul the Church is altogether new and different. The Church is not just a continuation of the Jewish community with a few minor differences, but it is a new creation (Galatians 6:16).<sup>31</sup> The

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<sup>31</sup>Scott, op. cit., p. 31.

Church had become the fulfillment of the prophesy of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:31), where the new covenant was no longer written on stone but upon the hearts of men.

The new covenant was not given to the Church, but the new covenant "called" the Church into existence,

to the church of God which is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus called to be saints together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours (I Corinthians 1:2).

God calls men, and in response they call upon the name of the Lord. Those who call constitute the ecclesia, the Church.<sup>32</sup>

### Ecclesia.

Paul's use of ecclesia has a unique and significant pair of meanings. Paul uses ecclesia in reference to both the total church and the local congregations. He does not seem to feel that the total Church is a coming together of many small congregations. Instead, he believes that the same understanding of that which constitutes the total Church is also present in the local congregations and is able to refer to them as the Church. In reference to total Church there is a consistent use of the Old Testament and early Christian terminology referring to the total Church

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Minear, op. cit., p. 609.

as the "Church of God" (I Corinthians 10:32, 11:22, 15:19, Galatians 1:13); the use of "Church" alone can also mean total Church (I Corinthians 12:28, II Corinthians 1:1).<sup>33</sup>

Deissmann contends that Paul does not formulate a fixed conception of the Church, that all of the churches for Paul are local "assemblies." All of these local assemblies together are spoken of as "the assembly" (I Corinthians 10:32, 12:28).<sup>34</sup>

Robinson states that the development of the term ecclesia implies an understanding of the assembly of God to be an eschatological community and that this meaning is carried over in the thought of Paul to the New Testament community. Robinson says that

. . . the church is the coming people of God, who will be revealed as such at the end of time. Yet that coming people are the concrete congregations of the Hellenistic world. This combination of the ideal and the real is characteristic of the Christian view of the church.  
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### Eschatological People of God

Paul was convinced that the Church was then living in the last days, a fact which is illustrated in the

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<sup>33</sup> Bultmann, op. cit., p. 94.

<sup>34</sup> Adolf Deissmann, Paul (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), p. 214.

<sup>35</sup> Robinson, op. cit., p. 59.

following passages:

. . . the time has come. . . our salvation is even nearer than it was when we were converted (Romans 13:11), Our time is growing short (I Corinthians 7:29), . . . the Lord is very near (Philippians 4:5).

This was an era in which the essential emphasis was the carrying out of the work of salvation for all nations.

A hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the gentiles come, and so all Israel will be saved (Romans 11:25).

It is this mission that had called and caught the passion of Paul and in which he lived and worked diligently.

There seems to be two elements in the thinking of Paul that are important, time and position. The Church, as the eschatological people of God, is not completely detached from time, but as Conzelmann says, there can be

. . . no speculation about time. The time of the church is a foundation for the period from the resurrection to the parousia. Paul is not aware of a Christian interpretation of history; it is exclusively defined as the time in which the church proclaims the death of the Lord.<sup>36</sup>

It is this era that Paul deeply believed to be defined as salvation. The position of the Church is one being set apart. Paul understands himself to be set apart to preach (Romans 1:1, Galatians 1:15), and he considers the Church to be set apart because it is "holy," marked off from the world. There is an exclusiveness that is marked from

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<sup>36</sup>Hans Conzelmann, An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 257.

Judaism, but this exclusiveness is not a withdrawal from society as many of the salvation sects of the time were. The Church is holy in that it possesses its holiness "in Christ" and not in its self-understanding (I Corinthians 8-10).<sup>37</sup> Paul writes in Galatians 6:15-16,

As for me, the only thing I can boast about is the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world. It does not matter if a person is circumcised or not; what matters is for him to become an altogether new creature. . . .

The new creation, the elect, the saints, and the people of God are the Church. They occupy a position in a sphere of history set apart, having been called into existence by the spirit of Christ.

It is significant in the thought of Paul that the holy title of "Israel" is carried over to the Church without any break in continuity and the understanding of the "people of God" (Romans 11:25f.). The Jewish nation does not constitute salvation or even a prerequisite to salvation. "So you see it is men of faith who are sons of Abraham" (Galatians 3:7, Romans 2:29). It is the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16) which now stands in contrast to "Israel of the flesh" (I Corinthians 10:18) in the thought of Paul. The Church fulfills the function of the faithful remnant tradition of the Old Testament.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid. <sup>38</sup> Robinson, op. cit., p. 59.

The Saints. It was established earlier that a manifestation of the eschatological people of God in the Old Testament is found in the term saints. Paul understood saints to have a unique meaning for the Church.

Paul uses the term saints to refer to all of those who have been "sanctified in Christ Jesus" (I Corinthians 1:2). The evidence seems to indicate that this usage of terms is traced through Jerusalem or the Palestinian Church rather than the Hellenistic Church. As was stated in a prior discussion of saints, the Hellenistic world did not refer to holy people as saints, but this term was frequently used in the Old Testament, especially in the context of ceremonial cleanliness (Leviticus 11:44). Evidence is found in the prophet Isaiah for the use of saints (Isaiah 4:3, 62:3, 34:9). Isaiah 41:6 seems to point to the usage of "holy" to designate the remnant.<sup>39</sup> Thus Paul continues to refer to Christians as saints because, as the ecclesia of God, Paul feels that they are the true heirs of all the rights of Israel. In the mind of Paul, the ecclesia is the "Israel of God."<sup>40</sup> Paul and the early Church were affirming their belief that they were the true Israel and that they were participating in the last days.

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 60. <sup>40</sup>Weiss, op. cit., II, 616.



This remains consistent with the thought and understanding of the saints in the Old Testament.<sup>41</sup>

The Elect. Another term used by Paul to designate the Church is the elect. This was primarily a group designation, and only once is used to refer to an individual Christian in Romans 16:13. The term used to mean the eschatological people of God defines the place in history where God has chosen to carry out his purpose of salvation. The questions of membership, inclusion and exclusion were not valid questions for Paul. He makes this clear in his description of the elect. God's salvation is available for all, for those from every nation. The saving work of Christ calls those and his body is constituted by those who respond in faith. The clarification of this point is made in the following phrase from the Commentary on Micah found at the site of the Dead Sea Sect: "All those who volunteer themselves to be added to the elect."<sup>42</sup> The people of God are held together by a remembrance of deliverance, election, and the hope of a promised inheritance, parousia (Romans 4:13-25), Israel, the people of God, the Church is bound to God through an act of faith in a new covenant which is written on the hearts of men (Jeremiah 31:31, Galatians 4:24),

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<sup>41</sup>Robinson, op. cit., p. 59. <sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 61.

a covenant which God will never repudiate because it is established in love.<sup>43</sup>

During the period when sects were appearing and announcing that the end of time had come, it was quite natural and consistent for them to identify themselves as the eschatological people as the meaning is reflected in the term elect. The Dead Sea Sect (Damascus Document 6:2) claims: "And the sons of Zadok are the elect of Israel . . . ." In the same way Paul calls the Christians in Romans 8:33 "God's elect." In Enoch the term elect refers to the Messiah, who is God's elect (Enoch 40:5, 39:6, 45:3-5, 51:5). Robinson says that

in Paul's use of the term, presence in the eschatological people is prominent: Rom. 8:33 one can be comforted that the powers of the present evil can no longer control one's life. . . . Eph. 1:4: God chose in him before the foundations of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. This includes most facets of the idea in Enoch.<sup>44</sup>

Therefore, Paul and the people of the early Church understood themselves to be saints, called out of the existence of sin and transplanted into the eschatological existence by Christ's salvation deed, ". . . sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together. . . ." (I Corinthians 1:2).

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<sup>43</sup> Minear, op. cit., p. 611.

<sup>44</sup> Robinson, op. cit., p. 59.

### The Body of Christ

The previous sections in this chapter have discussed the elements of Paul's concept of the Church that have their roots in his tradition. Paul does not limit his concept to merely a purification of the traditional understandings of the manifestation of God in the life of a people. Paul assumes this foundation, and then, through it, derives a new understanding of the Church. He gives a new dimension to this understanding as he develops his concept of the wholeness, unity, of the Church. This unity is manifest in the cosmic organism of the Body of Christ.

Paul's concept of the Church is not a collection of people defined in a predescribed way, but a specific personal organism. Paul does not say that the Church is a society with a common life and governor. Instead he calls it a unity, a unity with cosmic dimensions as well as personal. It is the glorified body of the risen and exalted Christ.

The body is a cosmic body whose head is Christ. . . the body is here clearly the cosmos, not just the church. The church is then seen as the part of the human society which is aware of and in line with this cosmic body, and Paul uses the term body to describe the church.<sup>45</sup>

Therefore, Paul sees the Church as more than just a

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

corporate or social unity of people. He sees a sphere of existence in which the elect, the saints, the people of God, and the baptized live together, experience newness of life, and put this newness into practice. By participating in the Body of Christ, the Church is the community in which He who was crucified is proclaimed to be the Universal Lord through the concrete activities of giving and receiving. For Paul, the elect, the saints, and the people of God are one in the Body of Christ. In the Body of Christ, they experience fullness of life in contrast to death.

It is not possible to speak metaphorically of the Church as the Body of Christ, but it can be discussed literally. Paul does not say that the Church is like Christ's body; he always says that the Church "is" Christ's body. For Paul, the Church "is," in a real and actual sense, the Body of Christ. The term Body of Christ definitely refers to an organism with the quality of wholeness. When Paul uses the term, body, he means "the whole person," and "the whole man." So when he uses the term Body of Christ, he is referring to "the wholeness of the relationship between man and Christ." The body is not something that exists apart from man, but is an experience of presence, a presence through the act of grace in which a unity of wholeness and presence between man and God is felt. The Church cannot

become the Body; it is the Body already.<sup>46</sup> The Church exists as the Body of Christ apart from any potential participation in the Body. The Body of Christ is the activity of incorporation. The Body of Christ calls men into new life and in the same moment it "is" the new life. One does not give the Body meaning; one only participates in the life of the Body.

The Body of Christ is not one of devotion and meditation. If man were caught up in that vain attempt he would be negating the saving aspects of the Body. The Body of Christ is the acceptance into the saving-event accomplished through the death and resurrection of Christ. The effort is not with man but with God. The incorporation into the Body is not the result of any effort on the part of man but is that of God. The Body of Christ is not an elect group out of history that has chosen to be in relationship with God. The Body of Christ is the resurrected body of history itself. The effort of man is faith and trust that he is a part of that resurrected Body. Conzelmann points out the difference between the actuality of living and participating in the Body of Christ and the fantasy of imitating a participation in the Body.

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<sup>46</sup>Gunther Bornkamm, Paul (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 194.

. . . The church is not in the same understanding of that of the mystery type cults. The church is not a copy of the heavenly world. . . . We are not living in a fantasy existence, but are living in a concrete existence, one in which life is given meaning and direction by its participation in the body and not vice versa.<sup>47</sup>

Experience of life is guaranteed through acceptance into the saving-event; all understanding of "being" is constituted by this action and all worldly distinctions are negated in the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:27, Colossians 3:11). The existence of physical, economic, political, and social distinctions among men are not disputed but taken for granted. They have no definite meaning in the Church. An example of this is found in I Corinthians 11:2ff. in which Paul protests the attempt of women to elevate their status by becoming the copies of men. If such imitation took place, worldly distinctions would be incorporated into the Church and thus define the relationships in the Church to be the same as those that exist in the world. Paul asserts that woman is not a copy of man, but that woman is called as woman and for that reason should not imitate man.

Unity and equality are not created by the conduct of the members of the Body; it is not decided through modes of existence of those who participate together. Rather, the Body of Christ forms the basis of appeal and calls man

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<sup>47</sup>Conzelmann, op. cit., p. 264.

to be of one heart and to portray this oneness in their existence.<sup>48</sup> Paul identifies the unity of the Church and yet recognizes the unique character of each participant. Cultural definitions of identity exist, but do not limit the unity of participation in the Body. These cultural definitions do not prevent anyone from full participation in the Body of Christ or from receiving the grace of God.

Any need to influence God is not present in the Church because God has already acted. All that is necessary for new life, justification before God, and receipt of his righteousness is for man to have faith. God grants life to man who is a sinner, who is separated from God on his own terms, because of his own initiative. Bornkamm says, "God is righteous and proves his righteousness by justifying the person who has faith (Romans 3:26)."<sup>49</sup> The community of the faithful has its existence as Body primarily in the One who gave his body to die on the cross. Existence is not in the multiplicity and variety of its members but rather in the Body of Christ.

### III. PAUL'S VIEW OF THE SACRAMENTS

All that is necessary for new life is faith. The Church celebrates her passing from death to life, the

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid. <sup>49</sup>Bornkamm, op. cit., p. 137.

Church celebrates the saving activity of God by participating in that event through the sacraments. Paul did not create the sacraments of Baptism or the Lord's Supper. His link with pre-Pauline tradition is clear in I Corinthians 1:30, 6:11, and II Corinthians 1:21f. The discussion of the sacraments will begin where Paul discovered them in the community.

As this discussion begins, it is necessary to establish that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are truly sacraments. Conzelmann suggests that the concept of sacrament does not appear in Paul and that one must be careful of using a common nomenclature in reference to both Baptism and the Lord's Supper, bringing them together in such a way that may do damage to their individual identities. Evidence indicates that these two rites are not linked together for Paul and are dependent on one another while still being sacraments. Conzelmann does give credence to this possibility because of the usage in I Corinthians 10:1-5. There Paul indicates a basic foundation for his comprehensive understanding of both Baptism and the Lord's Supper.<sup>50</sup>

### Baptism

Bultmann suggests that a sacrament is an act by natural means that puts supra-natural powers into effect.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Conzelmann, op.cit. p. 269      <sup>51</sup>Bultmann, op.cit., p. 140.



Baptism falls into this category. Traditionally, as well as in Paul's thought, it is taken for granted that the rite of Baptism has a real effect upon the lives and the "being" of people (I Corinthians 5:5, 15:29). Four motifs shall be pursued in this section: the bath of purification, the naming of the Name, the bestowing of the Holy Spirit, and participation in the death and resurrection of Christ.<sup>52</sup>

The first of these motifs of the sacrament of Baptism is the purification bath. The sacramental bath or the purification bath is an initiation into the eschatological community. It is this act that washes away the guilt of sin. There are two aspects to the purification rite; one has negative connotations, the other, positive. Negatively, the bath functions to drive out the evil spirits through its exorcistic power. Positively, the person becomes the possession of Christ; Baptism brings about salvation by transferring the saving-event to the person being baptized.<sup>53</sup> Conzelmann and Robinson point out that this is different from the transference in the mystery religion understanding. Paul asserts that a man may fall from grace, he may fall out of the relationship sealed by Baptism. In the mysteries he cannot fall from salvation. The cynic Diogenes Laertius (Vi. 2) ridicules the mystery religions for holding that

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 138. <sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 133.

Pataecion the thief will have a better fate than Epameinondas, since he has been initiated.<sup>54</sup> Paul confirms this point in I Corinthians 10; in spite of the fact that the Hebrew people possessed the sacraments, they could still be destroyed by falling back into idolatry. "Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" (I Corinthians 10:12).<sup>55</sup> Baptism is a purification rite, but it is not a guarantee that man will not fall.

The second motif under discussion is the naming of the Name over the candidate to impart the power of the One named to that candidate. It is tied directly to the previous discussion, but not connected directly with the bath itself. Christ is not called to go into the water to make the water holy and pure. Therefore, the naming is an independent sacrament but tied closely to the actual rite. The effects of the two aspects coincide, so they are easily combined. Through the naming of the name Jesus Christ, the person becomes the property of the Lord and is placed under his protection.<sup>56</sup>

Through the rite of Baptism the Holy Spirit is bestowed upon all. I Corinthians 12:13 states that "In the one Spirit we were all baptized, Jews as well as Greeks,

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<sup>54</sup>Robinson, op. cit., p. 66. <sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Bultmann, op. cit., p. 317.

slaves as well as citizens, and one Spirit was given to us all to drink.' This point is also made in II Corinthians 1:22 and Ephesians 1:13 and 4:30. It is this mark of the Holy Spirit that sets the baptism of John apart from the Baptism of the Church. That of John is of water, but that of the Church is of the Spirit.<sup>57</sup>

The fourth motif identifies a common participation in the death and resurrection of Christ. Bultmann believes that this is clearly a tradition derived from the Hellenistic world. Paul is using the same initiation-sacrament terminology that is used in the initiation-sacrament of the mystery religions.

In the mysteries the initiand is to receive a share in the fate of the cult-deity who has suffered death and reawakened to life -- such as Attis, Adonis, or Osiris . . . .<sup>58</sup>

This interpretation is foreign to the Old Testament-Jewish thinking which does not know of any cultic act based on the fate of the deity that brings its effect into the present. The Old Testament only records cultic acts that have their basis in the history of the people.<sup>59</sup>

Bultmann contends that the mystery idea is a cult celebration in which the celebrant is sacramentally brought into direct fellowship and participation with the fate of the divinity as if it were his own. This is not a repro-

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 138.    <sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 140.    <sup>59</sup> Ibid.

duction or dramatization of what had happened to the deity, which in this case is Jesus. Jesus did not die by drowning and the early Church did not consider Baptism as drowning.<sup>60</sup> Conzelmann suggests that through Baptism there is a transference of the work of salvation to the person baptized.<sup>61</sup> It is this transference of the act of dying and rising to new life that puts the understanding of Baptism in a category beyond just a purification from sin, protection of the Lord, and a bestowal of the Holy Spirit.

Baptism is actually instrumental in the conquest of death and the acquisition of life. Paul remains consistent with his idea that existence now is not the fulfillment, but an interim period in which the gospel is to be preached.<sup>62</sup> He says in Romans 6:4, "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead. . . we too might walk in newness of life." He did not say "might be raised from the dead," as would be the logical continuation, but "might walk in newness of life."

Conzelmann carries this idea a bit further. He interprets Paul's understanding of Baptism as a new way of life in the Body of Christ which anticipates the parousia.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid. <sup>61</sup> Conzelmann, op. cit., p. 272.

<sup>62</sup> Bultmann, op. cit., p. 140.

Paul does not make the parallel statements, "Christ has died and has risen, and so we have died and are risen with Christ." Instead Paul turns the statement in the opposite direction. "We have died with Christ, we shall rise again with him."<sup>63</sup> The emphasis is on participation in the proclamation of the saving word of God in the current age. The sacrament of Baptism brings man into an existence which is determined by Christ's death and resurrection; death is transferred and actualized here and now as a matter of salvation. This transference is not a final binding on the part of man; it does not take away his ability and potential for sin. A person may fall from salvation again; he does not possess salvation in himself, but in Christ. The determining factor is faith.

#### The Lord's Supper

Paul sees Baptism as the believer's identification with the saving-event and as the transference of that event into his own experience. It is the dying and rising with Christ (Romans 6). Identification with the saving-event actually means union with that event, union with the Body of Christ, the Church, the form in which that saving event is present (I Corinthians 12:13). The elements of the

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<sup>63</sup>Conzelmann, op. cit., p. 273.

Lord's Supper are also associated with the body and the blood of Christ. In the breaking of bread and pouring out of the wine, there is a participation in the memory of him (I Corinthians 11:24-25), and a witness to his death (vs.26). At the same moment, this is not an individual activity, but a complete sharing in the "wholeness" of the Church as the Body of Christ.<sup>64</sup>

The important understanding to be kept in focus is the fact that Paul sees the present age as the intermediate period, the time of the Church which is proclaiming the death and resurrection of the Lord. The proclamation of the saving act, the gospel, is a time of faith, but His coming is still in the future, and, therefore, the Lord's Supper is not the heavenly meal. The Body of Christ, the Church, is the same as the Risen body which is identical to the crucified body.<sup>65</sup> Partaking of the meal is partaking of the body.

The origin and historical development of this meal is not known precisely, but it is probable that in the early Church it was just an evening meal. The development possibly occurred because Jesus participated in a traditional Jewish fellowship meal and this was translated in Hellenistic Christianity to be a sacramental celebration.

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<sup>64</sup>Robinson, op. cit., p. 67. <sup>65</sup>Conzelmann, op. cit., p.274.

The Didache confirms that at various places in Hellenistic Christianity, fellowship meals were held that did not refer to the sacramental Lord's Supper. In Didache 9 and 10 a simple meal celebration in line with the Jewish fellowship meal is described without reference to the death of Jesus or to sacramental communion.<sup>66</sup> However, Paul received a tradition in which the Lord's Supper had specific importance for participation in the Body of Christ and therefore had become important for the Church.

Bultmann feels that Paul did not create the particular rite of the Lord's Supper in the form he expresses in I Corinthians 11:24-25. He is convinced that Paul incorporated a tradition already present in the Hellenistic Christian community. "For I received from the Lord. . . ." (I Corinthians 11:23). Bultmann says that Paul is not speaking of a personal revelation from the Lord, but that the tradition handed to him had its origin with the Lord.<sup>67</sup>

Bultmann looks at the passage where Paul calls the Lord's Supper "the table of the Lord," and feels that there is some connection here to the Hellenistic understanding of the cultic banquet (I Corinthians 10:21). He contrasts the cup and the table of the Lord with the heathen sacrificial meals, as these make the partakers partners (or communicants)

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<sup>66</sup> Bultmann, op. cit., p. 152. <sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 150.

with demons. The Lord's Supper brings "communion" (or partnership) with the Lord.<sup>68</sup> Bultmann thus interprets the Lord's Supper in a parallel understanding of the participant receiving a share through the sacramental meal of the fate of the dead and risen deity. Here again is seen the possibility of the saving event being transferred to the participant.

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation (or communion) in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation (or communion) in the body of Christ?" (I Corinthians 10:16)<sup>69</sup>

It is this common participation in the Body of Christ, through which the saving-event of the cross is transferred to the participants, that brings the two rites together as sacraments. These two rites, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, give existence a newness in and of themselves. They raise man to a higher form of existence than was his prior experience. They lift man to an experience of life, apart from the experience of death, that belongs to man prior to entering the Body of Christ.<sup>70</sup>

#### IV. SUMMARY

For Paul the Church consists of those who have been called into existence through the saving-event of God. They are summoned or called out of the nations of the world.

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 148.    <sup>69</sup>Ibid.    <sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 147



They are called out of the world, or an existence that is self-determined, to one determined by the resurrection of Christ into newness of life. They experience resurrection from death to life, a movement into the Body of Christ. These are summoned to participate in the salvation of God.

Paul understands that the tradition has been fulfilled in the new age. It is no longer an existence that is looked forward to with expectation. This existence is present. It is an existence in which Christ calls and affirms new life upon those who accept his call in faith and trust.

Through participation in the call, one has become a participant in the Body of Christ. This participation is manifest in terms of wholeness of the One who died and was raised. The participation of man is a participation in a resurrection from an existence determined by the world to one determined by Christ. Man becomes a new creature when he responds in faith to that event.

The Church is operating as a sphere in history which is proclaiming the saving act to the world, summoning those who have not heard, and calling those who have not seen, the possibility of life in the Body of Christ. For Paul, the Church is the resurrected Body of Christ, called to proclaim the saving-event to all nations of the world, summoning them to faith and participation.

### CHAPTER III

#### ALEXANDER CAMPBELL'S CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH

Alexander Campbell, one of the founding fathers of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), perceived a vision of the Church from his reading and study of the New Testament. Through a process of literal interpretation of the New Testament in a spirit of free inquiry, Alexander Campbell was able to pursue his vision and plant the roots of a New Testament Church. This Church reflected his frontier experience as well as his Biblical understanding, the latter of which fostered Campbell's passion for unity and dislike for ecclesiastical power. The purpose of this chapter is to uncover the nature of the Church as it is recorded in the writings of Alexander Campbell.

This chapter will be divided into six major divisions. The first division will be a historical prologue that will lift out the significant events in the formulation of Alexander Campbell's thought and concept of the Church. The second will be a discussion of the central understanding of Campbell: the Church is the Body of Christ. The third section will discuss the facts, the ordinances, and the faith of the Church. The fourth will be a discussion of the visible manifestation of the Church in terms of autonomy, cooperation, and authority. The fifth section will

discuss the function of the Church in terms of mission, evangelism, education, ministry and officers of the Church. The sixth section will be a summary statement.

## I. HISTORICAL PROLOGUE

Alexander Campbell's development was nurtured by his father, who gave him a spirit of freedom and a desire for knowledge. This chapter will begin with a brief description of Alexander Campbell's father, Thomas, after which an outline of Alexander's life will be given.

Thomas Campbell, born in 1763 in County Down, Ireland, was the son of a Roman Catholic who had turned Anglican. Thomas himself felt more at home among the Presbyterians. After his father reluctantly consented, Thomas spent a full three year classical course at the University of Glasgow and followed this with the training provided by the theological seminary of the Anti-burgher division of the Seceder branch of the Presbyterian Church.

Thomas Campbell was a scholarly and pious Irish pastor and completely orthodox within Presbyterian standards. He studied diligently and was known as a knowledgeable and scholarly pastor. He was recognized for his work with the Rich Hill Academy.

Thomas Campbell's good standing in the ministry of his church and his early interest in Christian unity was

displayed by his being elected in 1805 to go to Glasgow to the General Assembly of the Anti-burghers as a representative of the Synod of Ireland. He presented a petition which he had persuaded the Synod to adopt; this petition looked into the union of the two branches of the Seceders.

At the age of 45, Thomas Campbell resigned as pastor of the Aforey church, a position which he had held for nine years. He left his Rich Hill Academy in the hands of his nineteen year old son, Alexander, and journeyed to the New World. He went partly for health, but mostly to seek new opportunities for himself and his family. On May 13, 1807, Thomas stepped onto the dock in Philadelphia. He left his family in Ireland for nearly two years while he worked diligently to establish a home for them in the United States of America.

During this two year period, Thomas Campbell was associated with the Presbyterian Associate Synod of North America. He encountered difficulties with the Synod because of his attitude on the unity of all Presbyterians as well as his act of serving communion to all Presbyterians regardless of the branch to which they felt allegiance. The resultant censorship and limitation placed upon his ministry caused Thomas to withdraw from the Presbyterian Church and to begin preaching independently of any ecclesiastical authority. With several friends who were in

sympathy with his ideas he formed the Christian Association of Washington (Pa.); the thrust of Thomas Campbell's thoughts at this time were expressed in the Declaration and Address, the guidelines for the Association.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Campbell's son, Alexander, was born in the county of Antrim, Ireland, on September 12, 1788. He was an intense student, like his father, immersing himself in the study of Latin and Greek Classics, French, English literature, and Philosophy, in particular the writings of John Locke, the Letters Concerning Toleration and the Essay on Human Understanding. Thomas Campbell sent word for his family to join him in 1808, but as they embarked on the voyage the ship ran aground and was wrecked on the rocky coast off the island of Islay, one of the Hebrides. This was a fortunate experience because it enabled Alexander to return to Glasgow where he spent a year at the university before attempting the voyage again. This one year at the University of Glasgow brought Alexander into close contact with Robert and James Haldane and Greville Ewing who were to be influential in the development of his concept of the Church.

During the year of study at the university and discussion with the Haldane brothers and Greville Ewing,

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Campbell, Declaration and Address and The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery

Campbell began to formulate certain questions that were to come to the surface many times during his ministry and the church reform which he led. These questions dealt with the independence of local congregations, the ministry, the position and responsibility of laymen, the plurality of elders, the interpretation of scripture by all men, the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, and faith as the belief of testimony.

All of these ideas created tension within Alexander Campbell, especially concerning his relationship to the Anti-burgher Seceder Presbyterian Church. This tension became manifest near the end of his stay in Glasgow. When he had passed his tests in preparation for the Lord's Supper he received the metal token guaranteeing his place at the table. Wrestling with his conscience, Alexander Campbell waited for the last group to approach the table. He walked forward, deposited his token on the table, and walked out of the Presbyterian Church. (Legend, which is more dramatic, says that he threw it.)

Upon his arrival in the New World in 1809, Campbell was to meet his father on the road somewhere in western Pennsylvania on October 19, 1809. Father and son had been good Seceder Presbyterians when they parted two and a half

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(Indianapolis: International Convention of Disciples of Christ, 1949), pp. 1-23.

years before. At this meeting they had the difficulty of explaining what had happened during the time they had been separated and where their present thinking was leading them. It was remarkable that they had followed two different paths and yet found themselves asking basically the same questions and leaning towards similar solutions. At this point in time father and son combined efforts, opened their New Testaments, and, with Alexander doing the major groundwork and Thomas in strong support, they fashioned a New Testament Church.<sup>2</sup>

The following sections of this chapter will explore the thought of Alexander Campbell and his concept of the New Testament Church as he found it in the pages of scripture.

## II. CHURCH: THE BODY OF CHRIST

Alexander Campbell believed that the Church was the Body of Christ. The primary discussion in this section will focus upon that understanding in terms of the House of God, the Community of Communities, and the House of Faith.

Campbell's writings are filled with references to the Church as the institution which is the Body of Christ.

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<sup>2</sup>Winfred E. Garrison and Alfred T. Degroot, The Disciples of Christ (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1948), pp. 124-144; Robert Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell (Cincinnati: Standard, 1902), pp. 1-680.

In his words,

That institution which separates from the world, and consociates the people of God into a peculiar community; having laws, ordinances, manners and customs of its own, immediately derived from the Savior of the world, is called the congregation or church of the Lord. This is sometimes technically called the mystical body of Christ contradistinguished from his literal and natural body. Over this spiritual body he is the Head, the King, Lord, and Lawgiver, and they are severally members of his body, and under his direction and government.<sup>3</sup>

Campbell combined the expressions of the Church being the Body of Christ and Christ being the Head of the body. He does not make a distinction between the meaning and understanding of these terms. The Biblical passages which Campbell used to strengthen his statements are I Corinthians 11:3, Ephesians 1:22, 44:5, 3:23, and Colossians 1:18 and 2:10.

Campbell believes that the true Christian Church -- House of God, Body of Christ -- is composed of those people in every corner of the world who publicly acknowledge that Jesus of Nazareth is truly the messiah, the savior of man. Campbell feels strongly that those people, who have been selected by grace and have freely consented to bind themselves together on the foundation that was laid by the apostles and prophets, who have submitted their will to the constitution which was granted by Christ in the New Testa-

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<sup>3</sup>Alexander Campbell, The Christian System (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1890), p. 77.



ment, and who walk together in the ordinances and commandments of Christ, have done all that is required of them in order to be the Church.<sup>4</sup>

Campbell believes that the Christian Church is the institution called the Congregation of God. This Congregation of God is a community composed of all those that have gathered to profess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and to walk together in that faith. This Community of Communities is not a representative of the other communities, but is composed of these communities. Each of the individual communities are built on the foundation of Jesus Christ and participate under the same constitution, the New Testament, and jointly participate in the same ordinances, the Lord's Day, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. These communities are built and sustained on these traditions. Likewise the Community that is composed of these communities is also built and sustained by them.<sup>5</sup>

Campbell also understands the Church to be the House of Faith. The Christian Church represents all of those in every place that have responded to the call, election, and adoption, those who pass into a new life through the mysterious operation of the word of God upon man. The response for Campbell is an affirmative "Yes" to

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid. <sup>5</sup>Ibid.

the grand proposition. The grand proposition, says Campbell, is ". . . that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, the Savior of the World. He that believes this proposition is 'begotten of God'."<sup>6</sup> The Christian Church -- the House of Faith, the Congregation of God, the Body of Christ -- is an assembly of persons who are united by their common confession of the same faith. The Church confesses Jesus Christ as the head of the Church and the Church as his body.

### III. CHURCH: FACTS, ORDINANCES, AND FAITH

Campbell stresses that there are two elements that are essential to the development and sustenance of the Christian Church. They are its facts and ordinances. The facts are the message of God's activity and the ordinances are the vehicles in which one participates in grace through faith.

#### Facts

The term fact, for Campbell, is equivalent to the term deed; fact means "something that is done." Truth and facts are not the same for Campbell, although he realizes that they are often confused. "All facts are truths, but

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<sup>6</sup>Alexander Campbell, Christian Baptism (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1890), p.299.

all truths are not facts. That God exists is a truth, but not a fact; that he created the heavens and the earth is a fact and a truth."<sup>7</sup> Something must happen and action must occur before a fact exists. Campbell states that the love of God for man and the act of redemption are the greatest facts man can know. The facts of the gospel group together all the love of God in the gift of his Son. "He died for our sins, he was buried in a grave, he rose from the dead for our justification, and is ascended to the skies to prepare mansions for his disciples."<sup>8</sup> These are the facts of the Gospel upon which God's grace and redemption rest.

Campbell says,

When these facts are understood, or brought into immediate contact with the mind of man, as a moral seal or archetype, they delineate the image of God upon the human soul. All the means of grace are, therefore, only the means of impressing this seal upon the heart, of bringing these moral facts to make their full impression on the soul of man. Testimony and faith are but the channel through which these facts, or the hand of God draws the image on the heart and character of man.<sup>9</sup>

These then are the basic facts of the New Testament, according to Campbell. The channels by which men receive the grace of these facts are the Ordinances of the Christian Church.

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<sup>7</sup>Campbell, Christian System, p. 118.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

## Ordinances

The ordinances of the Christian Church, as Campbell sees them, are three in number: the Lord's Day, when all Christians assemble on the first day of the week for worship, hymn singing, prayers, preaching, and breaking of bread; the act of Baptism, by which all Christians experience the forgiveness of sins; and the act of coming together for the common breaking of bread, the Lord's Supper.<sup>10</sup>

The Lord's Day. Campbell is strong in his belief that the Lord's Day is an ordinance and a vehicle of God's grace. This understanding was due greatly to his literal interpretation of the Biblical text. He appeals to scripture and confirms that, because the resurrection of the Lord occurred on the first day of the week, underlining God's victory and the beginning of a new era, and because the descent of the Holy Spirit occurred on the first day of the eighth week, pentecost, the early Church had therefore gathered together on this day and so should it be now.<sup>11</sup> Campbell states that the New Testament offered sufficient authority that this day was celebrated around the social

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<sup>10</sup>Campbell, Christian Baptism, p. 259.

<sup>11</sup>Alexander Campbell, "Organization No. 1," Millennial Harbinger, V (1855), 374.

joys of breaking of bread, singing hymns, and praying together. Campbell draws his authority from the following arguments:

Paul arrived at Corinth on Monday, but waited seven days, for the opportunity of meeting the whole church, on the first day of the week.

. . . meeting together on every sacred return of that most memorable of all the days, not only of the week, but of all the years of time, to partake of the symbolic loaf and cup. . . .

. . . weekly assembling of the household of faith to enjoy the family meal of God's beloved children.<sup>12</sup>

It is the coming together and the sharing together in a common assembly that best provides for the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ to reveal his authority to the whole assembly.

In the mind of Campbell there is no choice about coming together for social worship. There is no other proper observance of the Lord's Day than the common participation in singing of psalms and hymns, prayers, reading of scripture, and breaking of bread. These are the traditions of the apostles and are completely binding to those who would follow those traditions.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 541.

<sup>13</sup>Ray Lindley, Apostle of Freedom (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1957), p. 126.

Baptism. Campbell does not see Baptism as a sign of introduction into the Church. He holds the belief that this is no simple rite of initiation that the participant is experiencing; rather, it is a means by which God dispenses grace upon the repentent believer. Baptism is both an embodiment of the gospel and a solemn expression of it contained in a single act.

Baptism is the remission of sin. Campbell believes that something occurs at Baptism that changes the life of the person being baptized. He is convinced that Baptism is the beginning of a new existence, and that faith and repentance are made fruitful and effectual in the "new person" at the moment of Baptism. He states,

. . . I believe that when a person apprehends the gospel and embraces the Messiah in his soul, he has in anticipation received the blessing. His mind finds peace in the Lord. . . . He anticipates the end of his faith --his actual emancipation and resurrection with the Lord, he thus formally receives what was first received by faith in anticipation.<sup>14</sup>

It is through faith that salvation and new life are found; it is through faith that Christ is embraced through the act of Baptism; and it is the grace of God that forgives man. The grace of God is received through Baptism. Campbell also stresses his conviction that Baptism is for the remission

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<sup>14</sup>Royal Humbert (ed.) A Compend of Alexander Campbell's Theology (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1961), p. 199.

of sins already committed, not future sins. It is possible that a man may fall from grace, but through faith he is saved again.<sup>15</sup>

Baptism for Campbell means immersion. He is convinced that through the process of immersion God forgives sins as the participant joins in Christ's death, burial, and new life. The act of immersion allows the person to participate in the dying to the old life and the old person, then rising to newness of life in the new person, Christ. Baptism signifies a surrendering of one's will to the will of God.<sup>16</sup>

The key to the experience of Baptism, according to Campbell, is faith, faith in Jesus Christ. Campbell feels that the Protestants had made a great mistake when they responded so negatively to the Papist practice of baptizing for the forgiveness of sins regardless of the faith of the participant and going so far as to baptize without much thought or understanding of Baptism being for the remission of sin. Even though he agrees that Baptism is negated and perverted when it is seen as regeneration, he does believe that it signifies the actual forgiveness of sins, while the act of Baptism does absolutely nothing without faith.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Campbell, Christian Baptism, p. 250.

<sup>16</sup>Lindley, op. cit., p. 119.

<sup>17</sup>Campbell, Christian System, p. 62.

Baptism is only a beginning; it is only the start in a new existence. Through Baptism a person has only been born into the kingdom. Through the obedience of faith he shall eventually hold the prize. Grace shall choose to confer eternal life upon him. It is not guaranteed at this point, however, since he must continue to grow in Christian character. Campbell believes that education plays a vital part in this growth development.<sup>18</sup>

The Lord's Supper. Campbell feels that the tradition behind the Lord's Supper, and the use of one loaf of bread representing the Body of Christ, lies in the Jewish custom of placing twelve loaves of bread on the table in the house of God. "These twelve loaves of bread were there as an emblem of spiritual good in the presence of God."<sup>19</sup> The tradition takes on another meaning with the coming of Jesus Christ and his institution of the new covenant. Campbell argues that because there is but one body, that of Christ, and because the Church is but one body, therefore there is only one loaf of bread. Campbell follows Paul closely at this point when Campbell says, "Because there is one loaf,

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<sup>18</sup>Alexander Campbell, "Reformation No. 3," Millennial Harbinger, VI (1835), 84

<sup>19</sup>Campbell, Christian System, p. 324.



we, the many, are one body; for we are all partakers of the one loaf."<sup>20</sup>

Campbell has a strong sense of participation in his understanding of the Lord's Supper. He believes that it is not a distant event that occurred once long ago and that is merely remembered. Rather, it is an event that is experienced and directly participated in. Campbell says that the loaf is a representation of the body of Christ, first whole, then wounded for man's sins. The breaking of the bread is not done as a representative act but is an actual breaking of the body. Campbell says, "The loaf, says Paul, which we break, is it not the joint participation of the Body of Christ?"<sup>21</sup> It is not a representation of the breaking of the body. It is not a symbol of the sacrifice of Christ. It is not a commemoration of the breaking of his body. It is actual participation for those who break the bread each time that they do so.<sup>22</sup>

Campbell prefers to use the term "breaking of bread" and none other. He says that it is not a supper in that it does not necessarily have to come at the end of the day nor does it have to be a complete meal. In fact,

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 345.

<sup>21</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Progress of Reform," Millennial Harbinger, V (1834), 96.

<sup>22</sup> Humbert, op. cit., p. 189.

Campbell feels that, because of Paul's admonishment to the church at Corinth for perverting the Lord's Supper into a gluttonous feast and because of his advice that they eat their evening meal prior to coming and partaking of the bread and wine, that it cannot be thought of in the sense of a supper.

However, in the figurative sense, it is better to refer to it as the Lord's Supper than to call it Eucharist or Sacrament. Campbell understood the use of the term Eucharist to mean "the thanksgiving prior to participation," while Sacrament was adopted by the Roman Church as a vow or oath to the Lord. Neither term is correct in the mind of Campbell. Since the "breaking of bread" indicates an actual participation in the event, he sees no reason to use either of the other two terms.<sup>23</sup>

Campbell also does not like to refer to "breaking of bread" as "communion". He feels that it is completely unscriptural and should not be used because it does not convey the correct understanding of "communion". For Campbell, communion means no more than "joint participation in any event."

When I unite in prayer with a society of disciples, I have full communion with them in certain petitions, confessions, and thanksgivings; but requests may be

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<sup>23</sup>Campbell, Christian System, p. 329.

presented, confessions made, and thanksgivings offered, in which I have not full communion.<sup>24</sup>

So, it is not correct in the mind of Campbell to refer to the "breaking of bread" as communion, because communion may occur at this point, but it is not the sole action and is not limited to the "breaking of bread."

Campbell believes that no one has the right to test the faith of another prior to the fellowship of the Lord's Supper. Therefore, no one can invite or disbar anyone from the Lord's Supper. He does feel that those who are not baptized should not enter into the participation. Since Baptism for Campbell is immersion, he says that he can join anyone at the table who has not been immersed until they have been properly educated, but if they refuse to be immersed after they have been properly instructed, they he can no longer, in good conscience, join them at the table. This is a point where his literal interpretation imposes itself on his spirit of freedom.<sup>25</sup>

Campbell is quick to state that the ordinance receives nothing of particular value in its saving aspect just because a minister is participating or officiating. "Persons, who in faith and piety receive them, know that

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<sup>24</sup>Alexander Campbell, "On the Millenium," Christian Baptist, III (1826), 237-238.

<sup>25</sup>Lindley, op. cit., p. 128.

they receive all the efficacy of the ordinance, independent of any special virtue in him that does administer them."<sup>26</sup> The value of the "breaking of bread", in Campbell's opinion, is the participation of each person in the event through faith.

This section has demonstrated that, for Alexander Campbell, every ordinance of the Christian gospel -- Lord's Day, Baptism, Lord's Supper -- is a specific demonstration of the grace of God faith is indispensable to the participation in each.

### Faith

Campbell says that without testimony there is no faith, because faith is only the belief or confidence in testimony. All of the facts and ordinances are for naught if they are not believed as vehicles of God's grace. Campbell asserts that, if we do not believe the testimony that is central to these facts and ordinances, we have no faith, for faith is the simple belief in this testimony. Campbell says, "Faith in Christ is the effect of belief. Belief is the cause; and trust, confidence, or faith in Christ, the effect."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>John B. Purcell and Alexander Campbell, A Debate on the Roman Catholic Religion (St. Louis: Christian Publishing, 1837), p. 275.

<sup>27</sup>Campbell, Christian System, p. 54.

God has provided these ordinances for man; he has provided them so that man might have life. He requires that a man accept them freely, without any price or merit on his part used to secure them. There is no prerequisite for man other than he trust in the reconciling nature of those ordinances. It is essential that man have faith that God is at work through these ordinances and that God's grace is evident in them. ". . . the validity of all Christian ordinances. . . must always depend on the faith of the subject."<sup>28</sup> Then man can participate in the Community of Communities that is alive. God asks man to receive the ordinances cordially and to give up his heart to God.

Campbell says that faith

. . . is a personal thing. It is a person believing in a person, confiding in a person, loving a person, hoping in a person, rejoicing in a person, and obeying a person. It is not an assent to a theory, or a fact; but it is a person believing, trusting, loving, obeying, and rejoicing in a person--Viz. Jesus Christ.<sup>29</sup>

It is the object of faith itself that has power to save, not just the faith. A person may have faith; he may have faith in false gods and not be any better for this. Faith has to be directed, according to Campbell's writings. Faith has to be "in" man and that "in" is the saving action of

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<sup>28</sup>Alexander Campbell, "Faith, Hope, Love," Millennial Harbinger, I (1858), 283.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 283.

Christ. "Faith, indeed, is but the hand that apprehends and appropriates Christ as revealed to us by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven."<sup>30</sup> The three ordinances of the Lord's Day, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper are meaningful. They are the dispensers of God's grace which occurs when man places his faith in these events and participates in that saving activity through them.

### III. CHURCH: KINGDOM OF CHRIST

When Campbell refers to the Church he means the visible Kingdom of Christ on earth. The term church for Campbell refers to either a particular local congregation or the universal aggregate of those congregations.<sup>31</sup> In fact, Campbell includes all those who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus out of a pure heart.

Christ's institution is a kingdom -- not a mob, nor a fierce lawless democracy, led by every aspirant and demagogue. Neither is it families or coteries of neighborhood associations in a country, a state, a province that fill up the idea of the church and Kingdom of Jesus Christ. Nor do all the congregations in all the corners of this continent, either in present dislocation, or in any other form, constitute Christ's divine and ancient character, would throw its arms around everyone in every place that calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus out of pure heart, and it would hold

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<sup>30</sup>Alexander Campbell, "Faith vs. Philosophy," Millennial Harbinger, II, (1857), 403.

<sup>31</sup>Lindley, op. cit., p. 119.

and keep him responsible to the Head, and monarch, and theocrat of all.<sup>32</sup>

This visible kingdom will be discussed in terms of the relationships of autonomy, cooperation, and authority.

### Autonomy

There are two distinct periods in the development of Alexander Campbell's thought concerning the relationship between local congregations and the total Church. The first era was highlighted by his expression of discontent with ecclesiastical authority, a discontent that manifest itself in Campbell's call for total local autonomy and independence in congregations. He was convinced that no one man occupied a higher rank than another man concerning faith and the understanding of the message in the gospel. He felt that there was not any justification for any one man to have authority about the faith of another. Therefore, in his early thought, as he expressed it in the pages of the Christian Baptist, Campbell called for authority vested in the local congregation in all matters of faith and institutional life. Campbell did not readily perceive that this belief would eventually lead to an extreme individualism and isolationism among congregations.

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<sup>32</sup>Alexander Campbell, "The Nature of the Christian Organization," Millennial Harbinger, V (1841), 533.

The second era in Campbell's thought was the result of a shocking experience in 1830 at the Mahoning Baptist Association of Ohio.

In the history of Campbell's reform movement the pivotal event came on an August day in 1830 at Austintown in the Western Reserve, Ohio. . . . The character of the assembly changed when a reform preacher arose to move that the association as an advisory council, or an ecclesiastical tribunal, should cease to exist.<sup>33</sup>

The Association had voted to do away with any time for legislative proceedings at their meetings.

This event opened the eyes of Campbell. Although he continued to affirm that each congregation was alone responsible for its own individual concerns, and that there was no higher ecclesiastically ordained body that could intercede in their internal affairs, after 1830 Campbell expanded this vision to include the necessity for all congregations to work cooperatively in matters of faith. He began to realize that what effected one congregation simultaneously effected all others. He continued to believe that members of one congregation did not have the right to wallow in their own ignorance and then impose their will upon other congregations, but also affirmed that there must be some kind of mutual effort for the principle of mutual

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<sup>33</sup>Eva Jean Wrather, Creative Freedom in Action (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1968), p. 9.



edification.<sup>34</sup> From this point on, Campbell thought and wrote in terms of cooperation.

### Cooperation

After the incident in 1830, Campbell saw that speaking strictly about local autonomy led to isolation and gave local congregations the right to separate and enforce their own peculiar beliefs. Campbell came to believe that absolute independence of an individual or an individual congregation had no Biblical foundation and that it was schismatical in its nature and tendency and, therefore, was not to be condoned.<sup>35</sup>

. . . Christians must regard the Church, or body of Christ, as one community, though composed of many small communities, each of which is an organized member of this great national organization. . . .<sup>36</sup>

Campbell stood in the midst of a dilemma in his own mind concerning the placement of authority within a church community. He had previously condemned any authority being vested in the ecclesiastical house. He had not been able to accept control of a congregation by any clergy or group of clergy for he felt they had no more authority than any-

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<sup>34</sup>Campbell, Christian System, p. 80.

<sup>35</sup>Alexander Campbell, "Co-operation of Churches," Millennial Harbinger, XIV (1847), p. 132.

<sup>36</sup>Lindley, op. cit., p. 182.

one else. Yet he had witnessed the unfortunate results of his striving for autonomy and independence. Campbell realized that some cooperation among separate congregations was absolutely necessary.

Two major distinctions were formulated by Campbell that helped him to deal more effectively with this issue. First, Campbell made a distinction in his mind between that which was eternally written and absolutely required by faith, and that which was temporarily expedient for the fulfillment of faith. Second, he made a distinction between the external control of local congregations by higher ecclesiastical bodies, and the control that is the result of self discipline among many congregations. He believed that an internal spirit of cooperation among all congregations was needed and that these congregations should operate in an attitude of responsibility to the general well-being of the body.<sup>37</sup>

### Authority

Campbell had strengthened his concept of cooperation when he was able to see that he was arguing a case of ecclesiastical authority vs. authority of the assembly. Campbell then had to deal with the fact that for many the authority

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 190f.

of the Church was understood to be the authority of the ecclesiastical ruling bodies.

In his debate with Bishop Purcell on the "Roman Catholic Religion," Alexander Campbell emphatically states his position concerning the whole Church having authority as the voice of God. Following is a portion of the dialogue between the two debators:

Bishop Purcell: Will my friend (Campbell) say definitely, before this assembly, if he believes in the necessity of such call for mission?

Mr. Campbell: I do.

Bishop Purcell: How is that calling made known, that mission given?

Mr. Campbell: By the word and providence of God.

Bishop Purcell: How can we ascertain that word and providence of God?

Mr. Campbell: By the voice of the people and the written word -- vox populi vox Dei.<sup>38</sup>

Campbell stood time and time again on the cry vox populi vox Dei, "the voice of the people is the voice of God." For Campbell, Christ is the final authority. This fact was revealed to us through the Bible and the voice of the people was the authority for interpretation of scripture. Campbell stood strong with the Protestant camp in

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<sup>38</sup>Purcell, op. cit., p. 44.

affirming the priesthood of all believers.<sup>39</sup> For Campbell, it is the whole Church and not just the ecclesiastics who have the final authority.

Authority, as Campbell sees it, does not remain just with the Church in the New Testament. Authority is given through the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom Campbell sees as the Christocrat, theocrat, and supreme ruler of the community presently in charge.

We have found, then, the first grave distinguishing peculiarity of that ancient sect of religionists, viz. that in all matters of a religious nature. . . all matters of faith. . . they acknowledged but one Lord and Master, one divine authoritative teacher, even Christ. . . . apostles, the prime minister of the gospel, always addressing their disciples in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. . . not only profess to receive Christ. . . but they must also abide in him by abiding in his word and his word abide in them.<sup>40</sup>

So, authority comes from our Lord Jesus Christ and his revelation to the entire household of faith. It is not a personal authority nor is it an ecclesiastical authority, but authority granted to the whole Church.

Campbell went through a period of change and development from his first affirmations that the local congregations should have complete autonomy. After reaping the problems of the resultant wild independency, he finally

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<sup>39</sup>Lindley, op. cit., p. 195.

<sup>40</sup>Alexander Campbell, "The Disciples were called Christians first at Antioch," Christian Baptist, II (1824), 93.

settled on the principle of cooperation for Christian statesmanship, with the authority of Jesus Christ revealed to, and expressed through, the Church. Campbell realized that the whole Church was responsible in matters of faith and doctrine. Campbell saw a concrete Community of Communities and accepted it as the Church, but he saw further the aggregate of these congregations as comprising the Church of Christ on earth.

Authority for Campbell does not mean an administrative relationship. Christ has but one Church, and the local congregations join together to comprise this Church. Campbell believes in a complete spirit of personal involvement and cooperation. He emphasizes the wholehearted involvement of all Christians in efforts or relating heart and soul, in prayers, in contributions and tasks, and in the struggle for the salvation of their fellow man at home and abroad.<sup>41</sup> "We want an efficient Christian organization. . . . Elders in every church who will cooperate with all the Elders of all the churches. . . ." <sup>42</sup> Campbell looked for a true Community of Communities.

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<sup>41</sup>Alexander Campbell, "Co-operation," Millennial Harbinger, II (1838), 269.

<sup>42</sup>Alexander Campbell, "Nature of Christian Organization," Millennial Harbinger, VI (1842), 185.

#### IV. FUNCTION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

For Campbell the New Testament Church operates in the dual task of glorifying God and redeeming mankind. Therefore, the Church functions in two ways; it serves as the spokesman of God and it stands as the critic of the institutions of society. These functions can be accomplished by example as well as verbally.

Campbell feels that the Church has a definite relationship to the world. The means of conversion are deposited in her hands and she is responsible for the stewardship of those means. Every individual Christian is responsible to preach the glory of Christ in word and deed to the extent of his or her ability, both in conversation and behavior.<sup>43</sup>

The function of the church has a divine reference. The breath of the church's function inhales the divine purpose and exhales the needs of humanity. . . . In meeting the needs of humanity, the church is making itself the instrument of the divine purpose, and conversely, the church must commit itself to the divine purpose if it is to meet the needs of humanity.<sup>44</sup>

Campbell believes that all the principles of obedience and of action are reducible to one great principle, sometimes called the new commandment, to love one's

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<sup>43</sup> Benjamin Lyon Smith, The Millennial Harbinger Abridged, (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1902), II, 141.

<sup>44</sup> Lindley, op. cit., p. 227.

neighbor as oneself. The Church is called on to share this love in the world and to lead men out of the world to a response to such action. This new commandment of love is given meaning and made concrete in a person, the person of Jesus Christ.<sup>45</sup> The Church is the Body of Christ and the individual members of this body must function together as a manifestation of that body. Campbell asserts that the members must function together to perform the duties of mission, evangelism, and education.

### Mission

For Campbell a necessary ingredient in the function of the Church is mission. Mission in the thought of Campbell is the simple narration of God's love to men in situations of pain and suffering, wherever that pain and suffering may exist. It is the responsibility of the Church to reflect God's love to the world. By doing so it is possible that the world may respond to the love of God.

To narrate God's love to men, it is necessary for man to do as his savior did; he must accept the weakness as the condition of the people to whom he hopes to minister. He must go to them and seek to minister to them in their individual condition, whatever that may be. If he is to heal the sick he must go to them and visit them; to restore

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 239.

the lame he must first be able to take them by the hand; to correct, inform or reform his erring brothers, he must go to them as servants, go to them in love. ". . . it is lame charity that requires all its objects to be as rich, as wise, and as strong as ourselves."<sup>46</sup>

### Evangelism

In Campbell's mind, the proclamation of the gospel, the proclamation of the saving facts of the New Testament for the salvation of mankind, is the major activity of the Church. He turns to the scriptures and finds the word evangelist, which means to him "one who is sent out to announce." He feels that congregations, or districts or the whole Church, has the responsibility of sending out men to preach the gospel, to convert sinners and to plant churches. When churches are established, the evangelist is responsible to assist in the election and ordination of elders, and in setting the church in order for its spiritual growth.<sup>47</sup> Campbell feels that to be effective the evangelist must become a member of the community which is seeking to convert and actually live with the people.

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<sup>46</sup>Alexander Campbell, "To an Independent Baptist," Christian Baptist, III (1826), 205.

<sup>47</sup>Alexander Campbell, "The Duty and the Means of Supporting Evangelists," Millennial Harbinger, IV (1840), 180.



The priority for the evangelist, and for evangelism, is conversion. Campbell continually refers to conversion as a necessary prelude to the planting of churches. He seems to confirm that a person must be converted, he must be changed, before it is possible for the Church to emerge. Campbell found that in Acts some of the dispersed members of the church in Jerusalem went to Antioch and successfully proclaimed the gospel in that city.<sup>48</sup> "A great number believed and turned to the Lord" (Acts 11:21).

The evangelist is instrumental in the process of conversion. Before a man can confess his faith and repent of his sin he must first hear the word. This is the primary responsibility of the evangelist. He must proclaim of the saving acts of God through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord, Jesus Christ.

The first act of conversion to follow the proclamation of the word is the confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Campbell made this point very clear in his debate with Bishop Purcell. He interpreted Matthew 16:15-18 as follows:

"But you," he said, "who do you say I am?" Then Simon Peter spoke up, "You are the Christ," he said, "The Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Simon son of Jonah, you are a happy man! Because it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you but my father in heaven." So I now say to you: "You are Peter and on this

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<sup>48</sup> Smith, op. cit., II, 142.

rock I will build my Church." The emphasis and necessary understanding is on the confession and not on Peter. The comment ought to have been upon the text, and not upon him that gave it.<sup>49</sup>

The Church is not built upon one man, Peter, but upon the confession of Peter, and subsequently upon the confession of each man.

Campbell states that scripture describes the Christian Church as a society of disciples who confess the one fact, and who voluntarily and completely surrender to Christ's authority and guidance. The early Christians confessed their faith, were baptized, and intentionally gathered together in one place, to walk with one another in all of the commandments and ordinances of Christ.<sup>50</sup> The only criteria for a man to become a member in the Christian Church is his confession that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and his subsequent baptism.<sup>51</sup>

The second response of conversion is repentance, which leads to redemption. The Gospel system for Campbell is a system of redemption; it is a system for Campbell that provides for the deliverance of its subjects from ignorance, guilt, and bondage. Redemption contemplates a new creation, a total transformation of man in body, soul, and spirit.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Purcell, op. cit., pp. 94-95. <sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>51</sup>Lindley, op. cit., p. 31.

<sup>52</sup>Campbell, Christian Baptism, p. 247.

Campbell affirms that repentance must precede reformation. Unless a man is sorry for the past, and grieved with himself he will not consider a complete change of conduct. The only evidence of sincere repentance is actual redress of injury done. This means not just a refraining from sin, but a total and complete restitution for the sin, as far as restitution can possibly be made.<sup>53</sup> Campbell senses and realizes the pain that an individual must go through in total repentance. Campbell interprets a passage quoted by Bishop Purcell that says, "Peter, when thou art converted, confirm your brethren," to mean, "Peter, as you have experienced the bitterness of repentance, you can hereafter comfort and strengthen your penitent brethren."<sup>54</sup> The community must offer support to those who are agonizing over repentance.

Repentance is followed by conversion or reformation of the individual. This is not just a mere change of a man's point of view or feelings; rather, it implies a radical transformation of his whole consciousness of being. Campbell says,

Neither remorse nor regret for the past, neither sorrow for evils done, nor purposes of amendment of life, fill

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<sup>53</sup>Alexander Campbell, "Repentance," Millennial Harbinger, Extra (1833), 346.

<sup>54</sup>Purcell, op. cit., p. 95.

up the meaning or exhaust the force of the word selected by the apostles.<sup>55</sup>

In this manner, Campbell believes that the confession of faith is necessary prior to repentance because man cannot repent of sin if he does not first have faith and the awareness that he has sinned. Upon the foundation of this confession of faith he then is able to repent of his sin and experience the radical transformation of his forgiveness. Campbell rejects any claim that the Church or the clergy has the authority to forgive sins. The forgiveness of sins comes from the power of God's grace, which is not limited to the vehicles of man.<sup>56</sup> The forgiveness of sin symbolically takes place in the act of Baptism.

After the saving word of God has been proclaimed, after man has heard the word, confessed his faith, repented his sin, and is baptized, he still stands in need of correct teaching and exhortation.

When they made disciples they 'separated them' and taught them Christ's religion. They ceased not to preach and then teach Jesus Christ. The new converts needed teaching and exhortation after they had received the preaching.<sup>57</sup>

Campbell is passionate about the necessity of knowledgable inquiry into the scriptures. He would go to great lengths

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<sup>55</sup>Campbell, Christian Baptism, p. 78.

<sup>56</sup>Purcell, op. cit., p. 126.

<sup>57</sup>Smith, op. cit., II, 149.

to confront someone he felt did not have the true understanding of a scripture. He feels that education was one way of understanding scripture, although he does not believe that education would necessarily lead to confession and repentance.

### Education

The edification of the Church is essential for Campbell; he believed that it is accomplished through education. Even though a person has heard the gospel proclaimed, has confessed his faith in Jesus Christ, repented of his sins, and has been baptized into the Body of Christ, the Church, he has not completed all that is required. He has just begun. Campbell feels that it is education and the understanding of the Christian Scriptures that makes the man. It is of necessity that he is baptized before he can understand the scriptures, but he cannot remain ignorant and still continue to grow and develop as a Christian.<sup>58</sup>

Campbell is adamant about educated people in the Church. He believes that the spirit and soul of all the reformations originated in a spirit of free discussion and free inquiry. He states that every reformation in society has occurred because of the freedom to investigate and

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<sup>58</sup>Humbert, op. cit., p. 199.

because of the people inclined to do so. Reformation of persons is no different. Campbell is convinced that freedom is dependent upon responsibility and that this is conditioned upon education. To Campbell it is unthinkable that one vote of an ignorant mind could nullify the vote of an educated mind. Even more blasphemous is the possibility that an ignorant majority could impose its will on those who labored long in the gospel.<sup>59</sup> Campbell questioned deeply the right of children and novices, adults recently united with the church, to have as equal a say on matters of scriptural significance as those who are mature in the faith and who have studied diligently the scriptures. Campbell feels that only those who have immersed themselves in the study of scripture and have demonstrated a sufficient growth and maturity in the gospel can rightly be considered elders and capable of making responsible decisions.<sup>60</sup>

On the other hand, Campbell fights against the notion that an education secured a direct line for grace. This argument he especially directs to the clergy. Education is not the method through which a man receives grace, nor is it a means through which grace can be extended to others.

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<sup>59</sup>Alexander Campbell, "Education," Millennial Harbinger, I (1837), 64; Alexander Campbell, "An Address," Millennial Harbinger, V (1841), 456.

<sup>60</sup>Campbell, Christian System, p. 88.

The clergy and the Christian Church can only educate those who have already responded to the grace of God in faith. Education is only a means of growing in the faith and in Christian character through a knowledge of the scripture.

However, even one who has responded in faith may elect to remain ignorant of the scriptures.

. . . if men are willing and open to receive instruction from the word of God concerning the nature of Christ's Kingdom, that is good; but if any man insists on remaining obstenately and perversely ignorant, let him be ignorant. It is only the duty of those mature in the teachings and in the faith who are to expound upon the word. It is the Lord's control who will hear it.<sup>61</sup>

Campbell asserts that through the act of education there is a possibility for reformation. But reformation is not dependent upon men, but rather upon the grace of God. Campbell remains consistent on this theme in all of his teachings.

Campbell pleads for the reformation of individuals but he also pleads for a reformation among the scattered people in order that they may all be united. He does not recognize sects, on a human basis, as divine. He also believes that the Church does recognize a people of God among these sects and seeks to call them out. As has been stated before, the Church is the mystical Body of Christ; so schism, or the rending of his "visible body" on earth, is

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<sup>61</sup>Wrather, op. cit., p. 12.

indeed a sin. The Catholic doctrine denies the "invisible Church" as expressed by the Protestant bodies. The idea of the "visible body" vested the Church with great authority, which is a position that Campbell found to be clearly sustained in the New Testament by the central position of the koinonia, the organic fellowship of the disciples, one body, "indivisible." The problem occurred for Campbell when the Roman Catholic Church mistook the authority hierarchy within the Church. Campbell feels that Protestantism had over-reacted by making its stand on the Bible alone and by placing all emphasis on the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit upon the individual conscience. What Campbell actually states is that the Holy Spirit, having descended on the Church at Pentecost, remains operative on earth through the whole Church, through the Body of Christ.<sup>62</sup>

With great passion Campbell states his view that the Church is at one and the same moment the whole Christian community on earth. It embraces all of those who live by faith in Jesus Christ. It is also a single community of believing men and women, statedly meeting in one place, to worship God through Jesus Christ. He believes that the true Church of Jesus Christ exists in both instances and carries with it the authority of the Holy Spirit. Any form of

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 13.



division, alienation, or separation is a reflection of sin and a determining sign that the Church does not exist. Any time that any person is excluded from the faith, because of difference of opinion or interpretation or because he does not have the facilities to approach the scriptures the same as another, a heretical act has been committed. To Campbell heresy occurs, not when one errs in judgement, but occurs when one "readily and consciously seeks division."<sup>63</sup>

#### V. OFFICES OF THE CHURCH AND CREDENTIALS OF MINISTRY

In this chapter it has been established that Campbell recognizes the Church as the universal body of believers as well as those gathered together in a particular location. He was also catholic in his understanding of authority, stating that the Church, the total body of Christians, speaks for God. When Campbell discusses ministry, offices of leadership, and call to leadership, he remains consistent with his thoughts. Campbell stood firm on the belief that the Church is the priesthood of all believers,

. . . and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (I Peter 2:5).

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<sup>63</sup>Alexander Campbell, "Queries," Millennial Harbinger, V (1834), 141.

Campbell makes a distinction between the priests of the temple symbolizing the Old Testament priests and those of the New Covenant.

The common priest went into the first tabernacle or holy place and the high priest once a year went into the holiest of all. Thus our Great High Priest went once and for all into the true holy of holies, into the presence of God, and has designated all Christians a royal priesthood with permission to enter always into the high place now on earth, the Christian Church.<sup>64</sup>

All members of the household of God, the family of faith, are called and constituted by God as a priesthood. This gives all free privileges of blessing God for the Lord's table, its loaf and cup. He allows everyone to approach the table without fear and in great joy as often as they wish in remembrance of the death of their Lord and Savior. All members of the Church have an equal status and share equally in the authority of priests.

Campbell feels that there are certain duties that should be assigned to those mature in the faith. These include the watching over the flock, administration, feeding the flock, teaching and preaching, and healing. This work is the responsibility of the elder, who is the shepherd. Campbell does not accept any titles unless he can find them in the New Testament. He feels that bishop, elder, presbyter, and shepherd are titles acceptable for distinguishing functions but not for indicating rank. These persons should

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., pp. 189-192.

be the heads of families, have demonstrated management capabilities, and be characterized by justice, energy, and discretion.<sup>65</sup> Prior to 1830, Campbell stated that neither the elders, nor the president of the congregation, should be considered rulers in any sense. When he finally realized the end consequence of this thrust, when he saw the rampant individualism that was afflicting many congregations, he began to move toward affirming the function of ruling bishops.<sup>66</sup> Campbell gradually became aware of the need for more orderliness and uniformity of belief as well as a standard of belief among various congregations. He became aware of how a few could effect the life of the many and how schism and separation could destroy the understanding of the basic unity within the Church.

Campbell states that the Church has the authority to select men to fill these offices. Campbell appeals to II Corinthians 8:19, where Titus had been elected by the Church. The Church has the power to "call" and holds the power to ordain. Campbell does not accept the thesis that this power came from God through apostolic succession to some special order of men; rather, he asserts that it had passed directly from Christ to his priestly body, the Church.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Lindley, op. cit., p. 161. <sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>Wrather, op. cit., p. 14.

For Campbell, the only requirement necessary for a person to be set aside as shepherd of a congregation is the call of the congregation itself. He refuses to accept any other criterion than this. It is not necessary for the call to come from any personal ambition nor as a mandate from the Holy Spirit. Campbell sees the position of leadership defined as a social contract with the individual congregations. The leadership ought to be granted by the voice of the community to those who have exemplified their maturity in growth, in spirit, and in wisdom, and who are able to demonstrate a strong faith and knowledge of the word.<sup>68</sup>

Bishops and deacons could not exist separate and apart from a local congregation, and therefore could come into existence only after the congregation existed.<sup>69</sup>

Campbell emphasizes that the act of choosing men for the office of ministry is a process of calling or selecting him through the local congregation of the Church.

## V. SUMMARY

The Church for Alexander Campbell is a visible body of people gathered to proclaim the redeeming work of God through his son Jesus Christ. This proclamation is made through participation in the Body and through participation in the redeeming works of God. Through faith in the action

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<sup>68</sup>Lindley, op. cit., p. 140. <sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 138.

of God in the lives of men, the unity of men is manifest in the Body of Christ. Campbell refers to the Church as the Body of Christ, the Congregation of God, the Community of Communities and the House of Faith. All of these concepts of the Church are based on the same foundation, that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior. All of these concepts are joined together and become united in thought, body, and spirit because of the saving act in the lives of all men.

Campbell's thoughts concerning the question of authority in the Church went through several stages of development. At first, direct rebellion against ecclesiastical authority prompted Campbell to insist that authority rests in each individual and not in a body of clergy. This thought leads to his affirmation of the priesthood of all believers and the fact that anything that is essential in the life of a person can be gained directly from God without the intercession of the ordained clergy. He confirms, however, that the ministry is essential; it consists of those men who are set aside by the community to lead in matters of faith. These men are not called to dispense God's grace to the community; they experience this grace through the ordinances of the Church: Lord's Day, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper.

Campbell also affirms the independence and autonomy, not only of individual Christians, but of the churches. He

feels that one person cannot impose his will upon another and, similarly, a congregation does not have the right to impose its will upon another and, definitely, an ecclesiastical body does not have the right to do so. The Church should be built and ruled by the laymen and direction should be given by an elder.

At this point Campbell saw local congregations as the Church since they possessed all that was necessary for salvation. They could relate to the facts of the Christian Church through the interpretation of the scriptures; they could participate in the ordinances, and they were gathered together and bound together in a common faith.

In time, Campbell came to believe that an autonomous church is not the true Church, although he maintained that individual congregations contained all the essentials necessary to be the Church. This posed a dilemma for him until he reasoned that the Protestant Church had swung too far away from the concept of the authority of God vested in the Church. The Church had been interpreted to mean the ecclesiastical bodies and not the assembly of people, so Protestants had rebelled against this and separated from one another on the basis of personal preference and choice. Campbell believes this to be heresy. Anyone who willfully creates schism is thus guilty of heresy.

As he considered again the possibilities of unity he realized that there was real power and authority in the Body of Christ, the Church. In fact, in the Church, the Body of Christ, is where the word and will of God could best be determined. The Church is the spokesman of God through the revelation of Jesus Christ, the ultimate authority.

Campbell states emphatically that individual congregations are not only responsible to themselves; they are also responsible to other communities that are founded and bound together by the same elements. Therefore, the one Community based on the facts, ordinances, and faith is composed of many local communities that founded their existence on the same foundations.

Thus, Campbell affirms that the Church is manifest in the local communities as well as in the one great Community that binds all men in participation together.

## CHAPTER IV

### A COMPARISON OF PAUL AND ALEXANDER CAMPBELL ON THE CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH

This chapter will first identify the fundamental concepts of the Church that are found in the writings of the apostle Paul. Second, it will identify the fundamental concepts of the Church that are found in the writings of Alexander Campbell. Third, it will compare the points of agreement and disagreement between these two men.

#### I. PAUL'S BASIC CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH

The foundation of the Church for Paul is on the call of God and on man's response in faith. The call of God is a historical reality, an experience that is manifest in God's voluntary intrusion into the lives of men, an intrusion that is manifest in terms of judgement, a judgement conveying the strength of God's love and the redeeming, reconciling nature of that love. The Church is not an assembly of individuals who have come together and defined themselves by their own initiative.

The House of God, House of Faith, Body of Christ, the Church is not constituted nor defined by the initial action of man. The initiative is not with man in any vain attempt to seduce God into action for man. Rather, the



initiative rests solely upon the will and desire of God. God is not bound by any agreement with man to act. God calls to man out of his own freedom and out of his concern for the condition of separation and alienation that is man's experience.

The response of man is faith. It is the faith of man, the complete trust that man places in the activity of God investing himself in the events of men, that completes the relationship. It is this response that defines the participation in the Church. Through faith man participates in a new life; man becomes a participant in the saving acts of God in history. It is faith that makes man righteous before God as was the experience of Abraham in Galatians 3:6. A man experiences the realities of a meaningful existence when he places his trust in the saving intrusion of God into the experience of man. It is through the call or activity of God and the response in faith that enables man to participate in the unity and fulfillment of life. The unity or the experience of all men is directly related to the act of God's summons of man out of the world into common participation in the Body of Christ.

Paul uses the imagery of the cosmic unity, or the meaning of wholeness of existence, that is embedded in the term soma, body. The Christ is the wholeness of the risen and exalted Lord. Paul does not make specific reference

to the person or to the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth. Rather, he speaks of the total wholeness of the risen Lord. The understanding of Church for Paul is that it is a living organism that expresses the wholeness and completeness of Christ. The individuals who are made righteous through their faith are the identifiable manifestations of the Church or the Body of Christ. Just as the arms, eyes, legs, nose, and feet are the identifiable parts of the human body. The Body of Christ is not an object of meditation and devotion. The Body of Christ is the direct participation in a sphere of new life, of new creation. The Body of Christ is a sphere of new life that is fulfilling in that man is reconciled to God and not dependent upon the world.

Paul speaks of two basic experiences of man. One is the experience of death, of sin, of living according to the values and the dictates of man and the world. The opposing experience is that of life. Life for Paul is freedom, freedom from sin and freedom from the Law. It is freedom that permits decision in the Body, the freedom that allows a person to experience the fullness of God's grace, of God's justification to man. It is the freedom to choose life over death. The experience of the world is an experience of drudgery and an experience of slavery, the slavery of the whims and passing feelings of one's fellow man.

The Church is not the total fulfillment of the Kingdom of God on earth. It is the Body of Christ which

is preparing for, and in anticipation of, the fulfillment of the Kingdom. The Church, by its awareness and expectation of the fulfillment is eschatological by nature and is expressed in its character.

## II. ALEXANDER CAMPBELL'S BASIC CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH

The call to new life and man's faith are the basic components of Campbell's concept of the Church. This new life occurs through the narration of the story of God's action of redemption through Jesus Christ. Campbell reflects consistently his reliance upon faith as the attitude of man to be included in the Christian Church, the Body of Christ.

Basic is the call through the narration of the story and faith. Campbell says that in every corner of the world he who confesses his faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, is embraced by the Church. Campbell states that the reconciling nature of God is not dependent upon the merit or purchasing power of man, but rather upon the trust, confidence, and faith in the reconciling nature of God expressed through Jesus Christ. The action of faith is a voluntary response of man as an affirmative action to the reconciling nature of God or the grace of God that calls man into a new and meaningful life. a life that is marked differently from participation in the world because of the

directive of faith. It is not enough to have faith alone, but faith is directed towards the reconciling nature of God revealed through Jesus the Christ.

Campbell has translated his view of the embracing nature of the Church into the Biblical language of wholeness, unity and the Body of Christ. Campbell believes that each individual person throughout the world is intimately bound to others through their faith; it is this faith that is essential. In the same way all communities are intimately bound and united one to the other through their faith. Since the criteria for Campbell is faith, then the Church stands wherever there is a manifestation of that faith "in" Jesus the Christ. If there are two or three that have voluntarily joined together to walk together in their faith "in" Jesus the Christ, they possess all that is essential for the Church. Therefore, the Church is manifest wherever there is faith in Jesus the Christ. The tie among all men, communities, and institutions is their common faith. What this does not do is spell out the specific relationship among individuals and individual communities, and between different communities. The tie is faith; all other differences between communities must be negotiated by the two communities.

Campbell stresses that there is a dimension of unity to the concept of the Body of Christ that intimately

connects the experience of Jesus directly with believing Christians in any era. Campbell operates in a sphere of existence of common participation in the actual expressions of the reconciliation of man to God. Campbell does not incorporate time as a specific present moment in the development of the Church. The Body of Christ is of such a nature that it transcends time and is relevant and present in any moment of time. This nature is qualified only through the expression of faith. Wherever and whenever any individual lives in the faith he is directly participating in a life with and through Jesus the Christ.

This point is most vividly seen in Campbell's discussion of the Lord's Supper. For Campbell the important action is the pouring and the breaking. Campbell believes that Christ is at the head of the table and that, like the disciples, we too are gathered around the table in the moment of breaking bread and pouring of wine. This is not to say that the elements are changed into the actual body and blood of Christ, nor is it to say that partakers are transported back in chronological time, but it does stress the transcending nature of Christ's presence and the action of breaking and pouring directly among us. In this way the validation of the Church and the experience does not rely upon the activity of handing the experience directly from person to person, but rather depends upon the action of faith of each participant.

For Campbell there is a distinct separation between the Church and the world. The world is the context of all existence. The Church is the context of life that finds meaning in its faith and response to God's call. The Church is in the world, but is not defined nor constituted by worldly standards. The Church is separate from the world in that the participants in the Church have voluntarily responded in faith to a life that is determined by Christ. Campbell says that the Church is not a democracy; rather it is a Christocracy. The Church participates in the depth of reconciling love, forgiveness, and a dimension of acceptance that is not possible when tied to the material and social values of the world.

Campbell stresses that the Church is not the full and ultimate manifestation of God's Kingdom. This is a paradoxical statement for Campbell. He believes the Church to be the Body of Christ, but there is an element of "not yet." There is still potential fulfillment to come. This is characterized in two ways. The first is the Second Coming of Christ. Campbell does not set a specific day and year when this is to occur, but speaks in terms of fulfillment of God's will. The second is in terms of personal growth and education. Campbell says that a man's journey in the Christian Life has only begun when he responds in faith to the testimony of God's saving act and is baptized.

The careful study of the scriptures through the eyes of the believer will strengthen and develop his life. This is a continual process for Campbell and never finds an ultimate fulfillment even though one is participating fully in the Church.

### III. A COMPARISON OF PAUL AND ALEXANDER CAMPBELL

In the previous two sections of this chapter the basic concepts of the Church in the respective thought development of Paul and Alexander Campbell have been discussed. A moment shall now be taken to indicate the points of agreement and disagreement in the thought of the two men. First, the points of agreement will be discussed.

#### Agreement

One point of agreement is the belief that the Church exists because of the activity of God. The Church is brought into existence, and men become aware of the Church, through God's call to assembly. Both Paul and Campbell assert that the roots of the assembly of people is the direct result of God's initiative rather than that of man. Men do not first join themselves together and then call upon God; rather men are joined together because they hear the call of God.

The second point of agreement is that faith is the response of man that unites man together and seals the relationship with God. Man's faith in the call, his faith in the saving action of God intruding into the world and into the lives of men, calls men into a sphere of existence that is unique to the Church. The Church represents that sphere of existence that imposes an awareness upon man, a shattering and sustaining awareness of basic trust and faith in God's acceptance, forgiveness, justification, and love.

Third, Paul and Campbell agree that the Church shares in a common participation in the life, death, and resurrection to new life of Jesus the Christ. In Romans 6, Paul describes such participation in terms of participation in his death and resurrection. Campbell also emphasizes in his writings the direct participation through the Lord's Supper. The participants are actually experiencing the same event and presence that was experienced by the disciples.

Both men agree that man is not locked in by his faith and may fall from participation voluntarily. A man may refuse to trust or to have faith, therefore refusing participation. He does this, not so much by his action, but by his mistrust and non-faith.

Fourth, there is an integral unity of the experience of all men who have heard the call, responded by faith, and assumed a common participation in the saving events of



Jesus Christ. It is this unity that is manifest in a sphere of existence that transcends chronological time and gives a quality of relationship to all who have voluntarily accepted the call through faith. The call to humanness and common experience, and sharing of that experience, is the uniting factor in the common faith.

Fifth, both Paul and Campbell speak about the Church being liberated from dependence on worldly things for meaning and from existence in the imagery of life and death. Death is a quality of life in which man attempts to create his own world vision and then attempts to become a participant in the action of that vision by placing his faith in material items, wisdom, and the consensus of men.

The Church for Paul and Campbell is characterized by its exclusiveness without barriers. The Church is a sphere of life through which man may find eternal life and, in that perspective is quite exclusive. However, there are no barriers preventing the participation of men in this exclusiveness and new life.

Sixth, the Church is a unique reality of participation in the unique relationship to God by existing in the Body of Christ, by existing in a sphere that is predetermined by the activity of God. But neither man affirms that this is the consummation of the promise; the Church is not the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God. The fulfillment is yet to come. This is the paradoxical "isness."

The quality of the existing Church is potentially full and rewarding, but the completeness of that has yet to be realized. For Paul this was to occur almost immediately. His main emphasis was on personal preparation for the parousia, the second coming. Campbell does not sustain the notion that the second coming of Christ is upon us. Rather he suggests that we have no way of actually knowing the hour or the date, and that our main emphasis should be on preparation. Both men believe that through this preparation we will find a more meaningful existence now.

### Disagreement

The following discussion will identify those points of disagreement between Paul and Campbell on their concepts of the Church. Their disagreements grew out of their differing backgrounds and perspectives. The first section will review their differences in terms of cultural traditions, personal perspectives, and the perspectives of the eras in which they lived. The second section will discuss their major disagreements in concept: the historical continuity of the faith, the position of Jesus Christ, and the problem of authority.

Differences in background. A major difference between Paul and Campbell is found in their contrasting cultural backgrounds. Paul was steeped in Jewish tradition

and Hellenistic culture. Paul was an exceptional person in that he could combine such elements. Campbell, on the other hand, was product of a Christian tradition that saw his great grandfather move from the Roman Catholic Church to the Church of England, and his father from the Church of England to the Presbyterian Church to the Baptist. He was also a product of Irish culture.

Another difference between Paul and Campbell is a difference in personal perspective. Paul lived, developed his thought, and was a part of the development of the Christian Church. He was the evangelist, the missionary, the teacher, and the model to whom Campbell looked. Alexander Campbell was removed from Paul by 1800 years of tradition and interpretation. Paul was a formulator of the expression of the Church. Although he may not have originated the uniqueness of the Church, he was able to see and articulate what was occurring and was able to keep before the people the boundaries and dimensions of the Church. Campbell reflected upon this expression and attempted to use it as a model for his own time. Consequently, Campbell had a difficult time identifying the specific content of the Christian faith as it was expressed through the traditions of Jewish and Hellenistic cultures. This became somewhat of a stumbling block for Campbell. Even though he tried to resolve the difference in his own time by identifying those

things that are essential to the faith and God's revelation, he also had to deal with the expediencies of his own time.

The perspective of the era was much more complicated for Campbell than it was for Paul. Campbell concerned himself with institutional and ecclesiastical power and authority. He attempted to strengthen the concept of direct participation without including rigid institutional and ecclesiastical structures that some believed were necessary in order to legitimize that participation. Paul too had some trouble legitimizing his authority as an apostle and his participation in the event, but did not have the institutional and structural problems that had become problematic for Campbell.

Disagreements in concept. One area of disagreement that exists between Paul and Campbell is centered around the historical continuity of the faith. Paul understands the Church to be a historical continuation and fulfillment of Israel, of the faith of Israel, the faith of the fathers. This is not necessarily a continuous history, but one of related acts of faith by the faithful remnant at specific points in history. Paul identifies such periods as that of Abraham who was justified by his faith and by the prophets.

Campbell does not accept any direct connection between the faith of the Church and the faith of Israel. He does not see that there is any need to put the Church at

the end of a long process. Rather for Campbell the Church is a new creation in its uniqueness and stands upon the action of Jesus Christ alone. He does not see any merit in interpreting or placing in context any earlier development.

Paul uses the imagery of the cosmic unity or the completeness, wholeness of the Church. This imagery is expressed in the language of soma, body, the Body of Christ. Paul does not make a distinction in rank, position or relationship of the individual Christian to the person of Jesus Christ. Paul refers only to Christ as the exalted and risen Lord. Participation in the Body is participation directly with Jesus Christ.

Campbell, on the other hand, combines the imagery of the Body of Christ with an understanding of position as it is expressed in Colossians. Jesus Christ is not only the exalted Lord, but also a co-participant; he functions in a particular role as head of the body, that is, the Church. Campbell speaks in terms of a Christocracy; this is distinguished from an autocracy or democracy.

Paul believes that Christ is the exalted Lord and the Church is a manifestation of that exaltation or resurrected body on earth. Paul does not distinguish between the position of Christian participants and Christ. Paul believes that Christians exist in a sphere that is the Christ. Campbell sees Christ as a distinct personality even in the

exaltation. Campbell relates the personality of Christ to Jesus of Nazareth while Paul does not.

Paul is not concerned with ecclesiastical power and authority and does not make any systematic reference to authority vested directly in the Church. Authority for Paul rests in the tradition and the calling of God to a position in the Church. Paul understands that he was called by God to be an apostle. Campbell suggests that power and authority rests in the gathered body, and that the ultimate authority is Christ. The Church as whole, not just the ecclesiastical hierarchy, speaks for God and is vested with authority. Campbell speaks of the gathered body as an institution with authority from God, by being the Body of Christ, to speak for God. Paul knows nothing of an institutional structure or of the Body of Christ speaking with authority as the voice of God.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUDING STATEMENTS: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

This chapter will identify the elements that the present author believes to be essential in developing a vision of the Church.

The Christian Church is determined by a historical event. This event consists of the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, the death, and resurrection, and exaltation of the Christ. The image of God, the character of God's activity in the lives of men is revealed through this historical occasion. This awareness of God's initiative, his intrusion into the lives of men, is essential to the Church. This awareness of God's intimate love and concern for man is manifest in the action of God first seeking man, God first coming to man prior to any act of seduction on the part of man. Man did not first call upon God nor was man required to fulfill any requirements of being. The first phase of relationship was determined by the need of man; man was struggling in his attempt to find meaning in his separation from others, in his alienation from creation, from his ability to stand alone. In this context God revealed himself to man through the event of Jesus Christ, and through revelation called man into a new life.

This activity of God in the historical event conveys the hope and the promise that God will function in the life of all men. There is hope and promise that God will triumph over the experience of death that plagues all men. This death is manifest by man attempting to find life, meaning, through fulfilling the great expectations of other men. The death that accompanies the experience of having one's identity and position among men determined by standards other than God's act of acceptance, forgiveness, and justification. We are therefore able to participate in this moment in the resurrection, a resurrection to an awareness of the beauty of Self, to the beauty of being created in God's image and acceptable in our finite and vulnerable state of existence.

Paul speaks of this phenomenon from his own experience of God's call. Paul had sought meaning by diligently following the Law. Paul had become a slave to the Law and as a slave found only the experience of death. But Paul experienced the resurrection to life, by experiencing God's intrusion into his life. "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle. . . ." (Romans 1:1). The experience of new life, new creation, he perceived, was not achieved by his own initiative, but by the activity of God that called him to a participation in Christ, a participation



that involved dying to servanthood of the Law and and being raised to servanthood in Christ.

Campbell speaks to this phenomenon from his understanding of Paul and from his experience. Campbell incorporates the image of dying and rising to new life and the imagery of crucifixion and resurrection; he incorporates the life that Jesus led and the truths that he taught. But further Campbell experienced a direct participation in those events. Campbell rejected the idea that his relationship to the saving act of God or the depth of his faith could be determined through close scrutiny and examination by other men. Rather, Campbell affirmed that through hearing the call through story and participating in that story, a person was acceptable and did not depend upon the affirmation of other men.

Paul does not rely upon any connection with the historical data surrounding the life of Jesus. The exaltation of the Christ and the participation in that event is sufficient for Paul. Campbell includes the life of Jesus of Nazareth for this helps to authenticate the event in his mind. The essential aspect is the awareness that new life, that an experience of fulfillment, is possible because God does first come to man.

The Christian Church is determined by her faith. The Church is a community of faith, of individuals who trust

that God will assist them during their pilgrimage to find life. The community finds life through placing its trust in God. The pilgrimage becomes the goal through the action of faith or trust in the grace, the love and acceptance of God. The strength of the Church is related directly to her faith. The strength of freedom in the Church is determined by her faith. The Church as a community of faith is not burdened by a sense of what has or ought to be done prior to experiencing new life. The Church does not survive because the participants attempt to perform good works. The Church is not determined by a striving to be like someone or something or to be moral, discreet, or upright. The Church is not determined by laying heavy guilt on those who do not live up to predetermined expectations. The Church is determined by the faith that God will act regardless of the sinful attitude of the individuals.

Paul testifies to the power of faith to justify man. For him the justification for Abraham and the prophets came through their faith in God. Through their trust in God and their trust that God would lead the way and point the direction for life. Paul believes that a difficulty arose when man began to put the law before faith. The corrective was the experience of Christ. But the act of faith is essential for Paul. Campbell assumes that faith is the foundation to the Church. The faith for Campbell must be in someone and

that someone is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Campbell does not affirm Paul's concept of faith being a part of the experience of the Old Testament. The saving power of faith is determined by the direction of faith, of faith being placed in Jesus Christ.

The Church is a community of men who have a perspective on life that is different from other men. This perspective is different because the foundation of the vision rests upon an initial action of God intruding into the lives of men and on trust of the faith of man that this intrusion offers an option of existence in new life or new creation. The direction of justification originates in the will of God and proceeds to men. The experience of wholeness, acceptance, justification and love through God.

The Church is a historical body. This not only refers to its looking towards the historical event of God's revelation through Jesus Christ, but the Church exists, not just in this moment, but as a continuous body which is defined by the relationship of those who have heard the call of God and respond in faith. The faithful who believe that God has previously acted to resurrect man to an awareness of his own beauty and will, do so again and again. In the moment that any individual realizes the beauty of his existence, the beauty of his creatureness, and accepts that beauty he has experienced the resurrection to new life. This

experience is not limited by time or generation, but transcends chronological time and unites all participants in such experience.

The Church is future. There is constantly an awareness that there is an end, but alongside this awareness there is a defiant spirit that says "no," that there are yet alternatives and options that are not fulfilled. This experience is manifest in at least two ways. The first is the moment. We are aware of the beauty of certain moments, and yet in the height of these moments rich in meaning and deep in the experience of life, there is a sense of waiting, of expectation, of anticipation for a deeper, fuller, richer experience. Second, we are constantly aware of physical death and the physical limits of our present existence. But in the midst of these we affirm that awareness continues and there are further possibilities. The Church is rich, but it is not consummated or fulfilled in this age.

Paul speaks in terms of the coming of Christ. The period in which he lived was a preparatory period, an era in which individuals were being prepared, purified, for full participation in the approaching Kingdom of God. Campbell speaks a little differently on this issue. He feels the entire life of a Christian is in preparation for life eternal and the return of Christ. This is accomplished through faith, with growth in understanding through education.

The Church is in the world but not of the world.

The distinctions between the Church and world are characterized by several distinct concepts. The first is independence vs. interdependence. The world seeks to be a law and existence totally unto itself. The world is characterized by autonomy, separation, alienation, and rejection of any expression of need for relationship. The Church recognizes the beauty of individual identity, but an identity that is also seen and dependent upon the intimate relationship to others, to the natural world, and the perception of God, and the action of God that authenticates experience. The Church affirms interdependence of man and man, and man and God.

The Church must be in the world, calling the world by judging the world through its own life. Judging the world, but not condemning the world; rather, extending to the world love. The Church must be in the world, living out its own experience of being called to new life through the grace of God. There must be some common ground of understanding prior to any communication. If the Church is not a participant in the world, then the possibility for communication between the world and the Church is closed. This participation or avenue of contact in a common language, contact through common symbols and understanding, is essential but involves risk. The danger arises when the

common ground is overemphasized at the expense of the unique differences. The Church must reside in the world and risk the dangers of the two extremes. The first extreme is characterized by throwing or expressing incomprehensible material to the world. The second is characterized by telling the world what it already knows and wants affirmed. The third option for emerging from the risk of involvement or contact is to supply a new element that is the fulfillment of the longing and desire in the world. That longing is manifest by fulfillment. This is characterized in the message of the Christian Church, the gospel, which must be narrated through its own life in the world.

The Church is celebrative by nature. The Church celebrates its awareness, its new life, new existence through uniting in a common participation in the story of redemption, reconciliation, resurrection in its own life. It remembers the original event of God's image revealed through Jesus Christ. It celebrates the image of unity, wholeness of spirit, grace and justification. It expresses its own experience of these events by participation around the Lord's table. It participates time and time again through the breaking and the pouring. It participates through the act of Baptism. It participates through the joining together in singing, praying, and listening together for the word of God.

These seven elements seem crucial at this point in determining a vision for the Church. They must now be translated into specific actions in the life of the community. The translation must take place in a pluralistic manner, depending upon the need of the situation, depending upon the context of the situation. The Church must know on what it stands so that it can truly be, and truly narrate, the good news of the gospel.

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